# BLACK ORPHEUS

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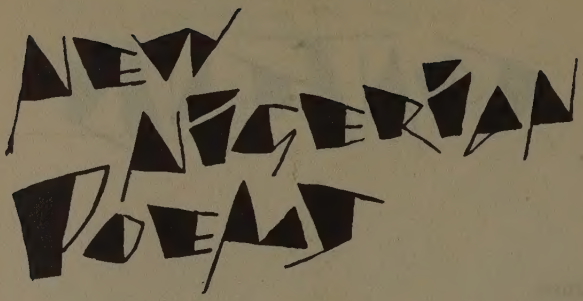


## JOHN PEPPER CLARK

### ABIKU

Coming and going these several seasons,
Do stay out in the baobab tree,
Follow where you please your kindred spirits
If indoors is not enough for you.
True, it leaks through the thatch
When floods brim the banks
And the bats and the owls
Often tear in at night through the eaves,
And at harmattan, the bamboo walls
Are ready tinder for the fire
That dries the fresh fish up on the wracks.
Still, its been the healthy stock
To several fingers, to many more will be
Who reach the sun.
No longer then bestride the threshold
But step in and stay
For good. We know the knife scars
Serrating down your back and front
Like beak of the sword-fish,
And both your ears, notched
As a bondsman to this house,
Are all relics of your first comings.
Then step in, oh step in and stay
For her body is tired,
Tired, her milk going sour
Where many more mouths gladden the heart.

## FULANI CATTLE

Contrition twines me like a snake
Each time I come upon the wake
Of your clan,
Undulating along in agony,
Your face a stool for mystery:
What secret hope or knowledge,
Locked in your hump away from man,
Imbues you with courage
So mute and fierce and wan
That, not demurring nor kicking,
You go to the house of slaughter?
Can it be in the forging
Of your gnarled and crooked horn
You'd experienced passions far stronger
Than storms which brim up the Niger?
Perhaps, the drover's whip no more
On your balding hind and crest
Arouses shocks of ecstasy:
Or likely the drunken journey
From desert, through grass and forest,
To the hungry towns by the sea
Does call at least for rest —
But will you not first vouchsafe to me,
As true the long knife must prevail,
The patience of even your tail?

## THE IMPRISONMENT OF OBATALA

Those stick-insect figures! they rock the dance
Of snakes, dart after Him daddy-long arms,
Tangle their loping strides to mangrove stance
And He, roped in the tightning pit of alarms
Dangles in His front, full length,
Invincible limbs cramp'd by love of their strength.

And that mischievous stir, late sown or spilt
On the way between homestead and stream,
Wells up in pots long stagnant on stilt,
Brims out to where ancestral eyes gleam
Till angry waves dam His track
And caterpillars riding break their back.

One leap upon the charcoal-coloured ass
Swishing ochre urine towards palace and sun,
Kicking impatient tatoo on the grass,
And generations unborn spared the wrong.
But the cry of a child at what it knows not
Evokes trebly there the droop, mud crack and clot.

## FRANK AIG. IMOKHUEDE

### NEGRITUDE

Poor black Muse, since we must, under newlaid laws worship at your altar
Before true acclaim and recognition can come our way, I have no other
Course than to dance to puppet tunes and 'gainst all conscience
Force on your new-tuned ears melody that's strange and strained
Sounds claimed by some to symbolise the throbbing passion of bonded peoples
But which in their final effects create, a face full of pimples,
Slavering obscurities both inane and incomprehensive.....
Yet I want to be known. I want my name amongst the host of Afric's Prophets,
To breathe out deep musings and fresh feelings of the long-forgotten past.
I already know your conditions; so you apostles, here I come spewing groans
from the deep forest negritudine:-
Deep down in Afric's forest of the stringy streams of Odindom (I hope this is
a nice choice ?)
There my spirit groans for the sweet silent past; the dead ancestral spirits
Awake all the native spirit in me, with throbbing drums and the music of
freedom—
Boom-bam boom-bam room-boom-boom-bah
Tam, tam, boom boom hoompa hoompa hoomph !
By the waters of Odorono (a new variation of it !) hoompa hoomph
Spirits awaken lethargic souls taram pam boom—
No !
I cannot continue in a strain that's both forced and unnatural
The sounds, if you think they're 'negritudine', make the 'idiot boy' of me.
O Ne—negri—gri, gri-tud-thud! (does that sound well?) -tudes!
Why can't you leave the black Muse alone? Must you make rules
And thus standardise and commercialise that which differs from prophet to
prophet?
I want to be known myself but this is not the means to that end
I don't care what people think of my verse, for what I write is me—negritudine
or not.

## WOLE SOYINKA

### ABIKU

In vain your bangles cast
Charmed circles at my feet;
I am Abiku, calling for the first
And the repeated time.

Must I weep for goats and cowries
For palm oil and the sprinkled ash?
Yams do not sprout in amulets
To earth Abiku's limbs.

So when the snail is burnt in his shell
Whet the heated fragment, brand me
Deeply on the breast. You must know him
When Abiku calls again.

I am the squirrel teeth, cracked
The riddle of the palm. Remember
This, and dig me deeper still into
The god's swollen foot.

Once and the repeated time, ageless
Though I puke. And when you pour
Libations, each finger points me near
The way I came, where

The ground is wet with mourning
White dew suckles flesh-birds
Evening befriends the spider, trapping
Flies in wine-froth;

Night, and Abiku sucks the oil
From lamps. Mothers! I'll be the
Suppliant snake coiled on the doorstep
Yours the killing cry.

The ripest fruit was saddest:
Where I crept, the warmth was cloying.
In the silence of webs, Abiku moans, shaping
Mounds from the yolk.

## DEATH IN THE DAWN

Traveller, you must set out
At down. And wipe your feet upon
The dog-nose wetness of the earth.

Let sunrise quench your lamps. And watch
Faint brush pricklings in the sky light
Cottoned feet to break the early earthworm
On the hoe. And shadows stretch with sap
Not twilight's death and sad prostration.
This soft kindling. soft receding breeds
Racing joys and apprehensions for
A naked day. Burdened hulks retract.
Stoop to the mist in faceless throng
To wake the silent markets — swift, mute
Processions on grey byways....

On this
Counterpane, it was —
Sudden winter at the death
Of dawn's lone trumpeter. Cascades
Of white feather-flakes.... but it proved
A futile rite. Propitiation sped
Grimly on, before

The right foot for joy. the left, dread
And the mother prayed, Child
May you never walk
When the road waits, famished.

Traveller, you must set forth
At dawn
I promise marvels of the holy hour
Presages as the white cock's flapped
Perverse impalement—as who would dare
The wrathful wings of man's Progression.....

But such another Wraith! Brother,
Silenced in the startled hug of
Your Invention — is this mocked grimace
This closed contortion — I ?

## SEASON

Rust is ripeness, rust,
And the wilted corn-plume.
Pollen is mating-time when swallows
Weave a dance
Of feathered arrows
Thread corn-stalks in winged
Streaks of light. And, we loved to hear
Spliced phrases of the wind, to hear
Rasps in the field, where corn-leaves
Pierce like bamboo slivers.

Now, garnerers we,
Awaiting rust on tassels, draw
Long shadows from the dusk, wreathe
The thatch in wood-smoke. Laden stalks
Ride the germ's decay—we await
The promise of the rust.

## NIGHT

Your hand is heavy, Night, upon my brow,
I bear no heart mercuric like the clouds, to dare
Exacerbation from your subtle plough.

Woman as a clam, on the sea's crescent
I saw your jealous eye quench the sea's
Flourescence, dance on the pulse incessant

Of the waves. And I stood, drained
Submitting like the sands, blood and brine
Coursing to the roots. Night, you rained

Serrated shadows through dank leaves
Till, bathed in warm suffusion of your dappled cells
Sensations pained me, faceless, silent as night thieves.

Hide me now, when night children haunt the earth
I must hear none! These misted calls will yet
Undo me; naked, unbidden, at Night's muted birth.

## DOROTHY S. OBI

### WINDS OF AFRICA

Winds that drift over the desert,
Dance over the Niger,
Steal perfume from the flowering trees
And from the pretty girls,
Pause for an instant with my mother
Where she sits in the doorway of our house
Her hands between her knees,
Brush against my body and whisper in my ear of Africa.
"I bring you a rendevous—remember, remember...
I shall be waiting for you in the village.
I am Udeaja; they will tell you I have died,
But I am waiting in the place of our childhood,
Uduchukwu has a girl child;
Ughajua has married, she called you as guest to the feast..
Now I am going, but the guests will be waiting for you.
My brother, they killed a goat in your father's compound;
Your sister is cooking the soup in your mother's pot...
They are talking of you at home,
They are speaking of you at home."

# THE LOCKERS

OPENING CHAPTER OF AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL

BY HORATIO EDWARD BABATUNDE JONES

Cool dry winds that blow across the Atlantic, that tunnelled into the Rokel and then the small rivers that channelled like curls of hair, falling into the nape of the neck-like banks...and then disappeared into the bosom of the African continent. The white sands on the beach reflected into the distance of the sun, mirroring the broken images of the moon, and the surfs scugned into the whirling night. Perpendicularly the Atlantic bumped into the Rokel and the Niger, and the Palm-trees sheltered the country from the rumblings of the ocean, before it could gulp the bit of land that is being nibbled away continuously; the cool wind raced, tapping both sides of the river, fanning the stubborn Baobab trees and then pushing it's wild caresses towards the silk-cotton trees; and then with an intense agility the image of the night caressed the half-naked wine-skin of the women, tantalisingly evoking the ferocity of their bosoms as their heels mocked the crunching earth underfoot.

The drums thumped through the density of the night, the forest muted with the elephants stealthily winking the flaps of their ears, and the lions and the leopards...like the unsolved echo of the bubbling night exchanged the ebullient gaze of a growl; the gorillas powerful like the night, with their hands grasping both extremes of the continent, slapped their stomachs furiously, committing the entire darkness into a roar of laughter, and their eagle-glazed eyes lit the forest into a palace of trees. The distant rhythm of gazes flowed into the river of drums that coated the mysteries of the night.

When I looked into the distance and the waves of drum-beat seizing earlike and then trippled through the leaves with the moon peeping through various degrees of foliages; the night tender but bitter... and the distant plucking of a guitar and the darkness now ... being thinned by the moon. We turned into the grave-yard, my mind was lit by the grey-headed tombstones that were shadowed by the insolence of the moon. Half-shaped and gloved fingers, the grave-yard sprawled into the edge of a brook, menacing the rushing water that ran through the rocks. Across...we did not look back and the night though not far yet. reverberated into the stillness of the neighbourhood that lay peaceful under the taunting eyes of the moon. The white tombstones on the other side. where the dead slept, dotted their heads out into the open fields...and then the windy-heights reflected the jugging of a distant train that retired into the womb of the

plains...the wheels mocking the echo of our voices cooed away from us. The lights that shone in front of us danced in spots through the cover of the branches

Though it was late, some of the cafes were still open and the bars gaped with drunks who were counting their virgin holds. The cool air wound into a torrent and the river rushed at the banks...and the dead woke and walked, teasing the drunks. Marie looked at me and then wound her head shoving a bundle of air to the other side of the city, her tool-pointed fingernails grabbed into my flesh, and her glittering eyes sunk in fear as the focusing tombstones stared at us. The tallness of her body picked into the ground, and then like an eel the svelte form sliced into the empty air...with her crunching steps drinking into the distance as they reflected into the stillness of the turf. Her bosom heaving with the rhythm of her body and her charcoal skin dyed into the colour of the night, I pulled her close to me and then squeezed her powerful shoulders. I could feel the dancing of her breath mingling with the closeness of the drum-sound coming to us from the distance. The stars that stood not too far from being watched, hung out like the piercing touch of her nipples. On the other side the clouds, and a blanket of blue sky covered the tropical night, imitating the lovers as they disappeared into the recesses of the night...searching for the mystery of their hearts; pulling myself away from her, I could see the thick lips and the contours that the moon flung on them, beaming a sensuous elevation that silhouetted against the broken lights of time.

It took us sometime to traverse the cemetry, and when I looked, I could feel a large portion of tombstones glittering behind us. Out...and over the stream that flowed into the tributaries of the Rokel and then into the clamour of the Atlantic lay another portion of the cemetry...on this side the drums came nearer and voices stood in the air like broken glasses reflecting shadows in all directions, we stood for a while and then walked without saying much; the drummers that talked in the air of the night, and the dancers that threatened the purity of the soil... the singers that clapped into the air, and the music that flew abstractly into nowhere that human lived...except into the dead that slept.. the dead that marched stealthily...the dead that chanted and also the dead that loved themselves with sex and the spirit The trees that lit both sides of the road and the electric lamps that darkened the brightness of the night...and also the continuous echo of the babies that cooed in their mothers' wombs...the babies that whispered in the sleeping ears of their mothers and then those who sucked away the sleeping breasts of their mothers...with these distant mysteries of a sex mad night, the owls laughed a rude laugh, mocking the plasticity of the ebonied human-form. Again her sizzling eyes watched into the thumping of my heart, and then we moved into the open...away from the grave-yard that had frightened her, and the broken shadows that fell into the ground and the cruel eyes of the night that peeped into the leaves of time that sheltered our heads...walking past the fertility of the tree-trunks, with their vanes curved in ceremoniously, we arrived into the main road, almost like conjurors the cars whisked away into the obscurity of the distant auto-route, and the tyres retched into the wells of the asphalt pavements.

"Oh ... yes", she said. I could see that she was referring to the cars that raced like panthers. Possibly my imagination, but when we moved about, the elect-

ric lamps lit our faces...the music that drowned the night in it's sleep was non-existent, I could see the deep suffering on Marie's face, bits of light reflecting her face; and then her eyes shining fiercely in their sockets, she wanted to know if I was feeling all right. I didn't answer immediately, but after a while, I told her not to bother, as I was like that the electric-bulbs were penetrating everything, and my eyes ached under them; the bulbs seated in their sockets like bishops, and the flies sweating in the roundness of the glass, the bar lined with people and the counter filled with sprawillng dirty fingers that looked like animal claws, the beverages steaming rudely with gas...and the coca-cola, brown like liquid ochre...flies; the cow-flies sandwiched between the sandwiches, they all talked under whispering voices and eyes cloaked in mistrust, as they thrust out watching one another. The "patron" his moustache tightly brushed on either side of his face, the towel slung carelessly round his shoulders, exposed large palms that hung on his wrists awkwardly; the striking features of his face were tapered down to his chin, looking at the well-plastered moustache, one could see the eyes dancing on everyone in the salon; I could see the way he was ordering things around, that he was anything but one of the types that came out of the 1914-18 war, and his little pension that he got from the government had all gone into the business and now he was doing fine; I looked at Marie. I was surprised to see that she was taken up with a little man and a monkey; the man picked up the monkey from the floor and then whispered something in the animal's ear and then he pinned the ape down on the ground; wiping his moustache .... which was almost a cluster on the top of his lip; there was something comic about the whole thing. he looked around himself like an actor, and then tilted his hat rakishly, winding the leash of the animal round his arm properly, he pulled his jacket about tightly just like a woman picking herself together, he strolled around the place with the monkey, his voice coming out of his chest like a barrel hobbling downhill.

"Ladies and gent'men some 'you go ome tonight an' do wot come nachral"... He stopped for a while and then took a gulp from the beer mug. he balanced it on his head, broadside, after a while he placed the mug back on the table then round like a ball-room dancer without spilling the liquid... "... Ah, now let me tell you, Julius Caesar..." and the animal somersaulted standing almost on the same spot, this feat suprised everybody, Marie pulled my arm, putting me off my balance. The man passed his hand over his mouth like he had been doing ever since and then came out with his fake bass voice which rolls in a way that almost frightens one as to how he could do it.

"Julius... Caesar 'ere is a poet... an' a lover . . . well you know" he continued, "Most poets aren't lovers... but a true one is one...". The people laughed, and then he took another gulp from the mug, since it was empty, he put it on the counter for a refill, and without looking where he was putting the mug he jumped away into the other side of the room, almost falling into the lap of a woman..."Now let me tell you what he talked about. Mister Caesar wants to pass the night with one of you nice ladies and of course ... he would show whichever of you ladies go and be kind enough; what the real monkey trick is..." Marie shrugged her shoulders in disgust and then said to me that it would be better

for us to go to the other side of the Cafe...the man must have made one of his rude signs because when we were walking out, the people began to laugh, but since she pretended as if it was nothing, I myself did likewise; I went back into the salon and told the proprietor that he could transfer our service into the other room, he shook his head as I went out to join her, we talked about one thing and the other, it was like that sometimes we would talk without saying anything specific, in fact it was a habit which I picked up from her, and sometimes I would find myself chattering away without really doing much. I was happy again for we were alone. I kept watching the low part of her dress which was the latest style, my eyes traced the lines of her bosom. I put my arm around her, and then squeezed her powerful shoulders, she moved away a little without saying much, anyway it was a sign that she was not in the mood for any such advances then the proprietor came and put two glasses on the table and his eyes rested on the triangle that hung between her throat and her bosom, the elegance of a neck that craned her head. I don't know what happened, but he pulled himself up and raced back to the salon, I was aware that she must have thrown him one of those piercing looks, that could only come from her. We could still hear the croaky voice of the man and his monkey, yes, he was still going on with his row. We watched the people mostly the drunks that came from the Bar opposite, and they were mostly tipsy tightly shuffling away, the cars passed and we could just have time to see the head of the chauffeur before he disappeared, in our part, the drivers only have one speed, and that is to let the cars fly as they would say. We could still feel the voice of the rascal coming out into the open, well I wasn't really interested in what he was saying, but since it was like that, I couldn't possibly shut myself away from what he was saying..."Let me tell a funny story... about the blind African who sold a dead elephant to an Englishman"...Marie touched me with the tip of her fingers, almost with a signal of them, she let me know that she wants to go. I went back into the place and then left the money on the counter, in fact I made sure that the moustache grabbed it before anyone else. Out in the street, across the road, the fresh air floated in the warm night, and the stars that scattered about in the sky partly surrounded the moon, I took a chestful of air into my lungs through my nostrils. I could feel the sensation burning my head. Anyway it was nice, I could feel the blood coursing down my spine. The man came over to us, in fact, he should have called us in a way that would have made it reasonable instead, he only gave a sharp whistle, which made Marie angry, and she was one with temper. He swung his gaze about us, still not saying a word except for the sharp pipey sound that came out of his lips, there was a bunch of people standing on the other side of the road, talking about something, he kissed the woman, and then waved his hand up in the air in the distance. I moved around until I was able to put myself between her and the man.

"You got your papers?"... the man demanded with his hand stretched out. I didn't answer, except let the small pass-book-like document fall in the palm of his hand. He studied me photographically, lifted his head for a few seconds, trying to make sure that every detail of my face was traced on the photo, he shuffled the papers back into my hand, and then ran his eyes on Marie. He touched his cap and like walking away from us, he told me that according to my age, I had no right

to be walking in the street about so late, and what's more, I had no right... He didn't finish what he was going to say, but I felt that he was referring to the way in which I had my hand around Marie, in fact, it was nothing to be frowned upon, anyway I didn't answer; there was no point in saying anything except to start walking away from him. I put my arm around her as I had done before, and then walked away into the thickness of the burning moon over us; the thin grey clouds now, brightly lit, the drunks were rushing out in twos into the recess that was by the alley-way, to relieve themselves. Her burning eyes sunk into my flesh and then her gaze shifted my heart away from it's case and the pollulation of her bosom pricked the stillness of the night, rousing in me the animal of the teasing night. I put my hand over her taut and sensuous bosom and then her powerful strides provoked the diminishing distance.

Now! holding her like that, as we walked away I decided that it would be better to see her another time, her aunt wasn't the sort that would let us do things she would refer to as immoral, and what's more, her staying out so late would make things difficult for her at work. I told her now I felt, and then she began to protest wildly, letting me know that she was old enough to know what she wanted to do; I knew she didn't like her aunt, she was only waiting for the chance of leaving and finding a room somewhere; of course she knew it would be something difficult... but she was one with a head as hard as rock. I didn't want to start an argument, in fact I was getting fed-up with it all. She swung her hair with her glance falling on my face, which had lost all its smiles... if anyone is to talk about morals, it mustn't be her, she said. Trying to avoid her, I raised my head counting the lamp posts that lined the distance. Her hand glissed against my skin and the leatheriness rustled like the whisk of fur. I told her that I had nothing against her coming home with me, but the only trouble was, as I had explained... and the night had sunk into almost the first part of morning... the bars... the salons and the drunks had completely disappeared...living on the outskirts of town is not an easy thing... the part generally known as the Other Side... because one has to go by the cemetry.

And people would just simply say they would rather take the longcut, that is avoiding the cemetry at night. It was only the short-cut through the cemetry that fetched us into that part of town... they would pass by it during the day ... even then it would be a certain kind of respect, but at night it was another question. Not that anyone would agree to admit that there is something dividing the dead and the living, but it was just something that nobody talks about... mentioning the fact of its existence, would just shove them away from you coldly. And if they are forced to go by it at night... some would much rather pass the night in town. there had been several stories which had been modified beyond reality. We walked and then she asked me if we would have to go by the graved-yard again. I didn't quite know what to say, so I remained quiet, hoping that we might make a cut and take the long road which really is a quarter of an hour's difference. I told her that it would be better to take the long road, seeing that she was almost out of breath, and that she could last the difference. She agreed wih me: she wormed her fingers into mine with contentment, then she said that when we got married all our problems would have been finished

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as we would be living together as man and wife in the real way. I remained quiet...after a while she wanted to know if I still loved her. I said yes, but then she accused me of not wanting to answer, and that the best thing for me would be to remain quiet as I sometimes do. I could see that she was getting grieved for nothing, may be she was right, because I couldn't sort or define our relationship. I knew that my vagueness had put her off, of course I must admit that there is something abstract in me, sometimes it puts my best friends off, I think that I must have been walking a bit too fast, because she pulled me back in a way saying that she was with me.

The man stopped and then hung his face out of the Ford ... I was able to see that it was one of those sloping back models of the late thirties. There was something brown about him one could hardly tell in the darknes and the unreality of the street lamps glossed the mudguard in disdain; he wanted to know if we were going across into the low-country. I could tell that he was a foreign one. Of course he referred to Marie as my sister, but that didn't bother me at all, it was the low-country that sounded strange in my ears, of course I told him that he could drop us as far as the tree that covers the River. It was a tall silk-cotton tree, that sheltered the brook from the sun, and prevented the sun from blistering the rocks. The man drove past trees that fleeted into our rear; I could feel the swishing of the exhaust pipes ... Marie letting her hand fall on my lap. and her breathing agitated with the rise and fall of the roads, I had to wake her up when we came within the cotton tree. I waved back to him in the darkness, and the grey cloud that came from the exhaust under the rear-lamp, red as the belching dust, I recited a couple of lines from N'jo Lea and her voice went in unison with mine until we got home. The distance that separated us from night and the crickets...the continuous African night, the frogs that croaked in the corners that no one dares, the birds whispering the new day, the sly owls clawed unto the branches of some distant tree, winking in contemplation; I didn't mind her coming home with me, in fact I began to look forward to it with the eagerness of youth...yes the only thing I needed that night was her body, and she was also an accomplice. I wasn't able to get to asking her, maybe she needed more, and there was no use, and she had stopped reminding me of my mother...she had taken it for granted that Mamam was too liberal minded to worry about our goings-on.

When we got upstairs, I couldn't remember whether it was I who opened the door or not, she wouldn't have been able because I had the keys, or perhaps I forgot to shut the door in the excitement of going to meet her, anyway I thrust my hand out driving the windows apart and the fresh wind rushed at my face, blowing my shirt which was now partly opened. The staleness of the room was washed away and the torrent of air whirled around for sometime and then it became hot again. I watched her swishing her dress as she walked about putting the kettle on the electric plate, and then I pulled my trousers down. and folded them on the chair neatly; some of the pennies that lurked in my pocket dropped out and they rolled under the bed. She opened her heavy eyelids warning me that it was late already, to keep on making noise on the others. I was soon to let her know that nobody would bother, since it was only some coins that dropped out of my pocket. She went and sprawled herself on the bed, with

her feet towards the pillow; I could see that she was tired, the kettle began to whistle...easing the cap off, picking her up into the right position, she opened her eyes, and then I told her she might as well take her clothes off; she didn't like the idea, maybe it was the tone of my voice, I apologised, but she shook that off. I could feel she didn't want to blame me, instead she got up and poured some beverage into the cup, which we drank almost in silence...yes, I could feel the warmth coursing down my stomach...warm-like.

Mother had always been careful, she had often accused me of sleeping wildly, I expect that this had been in my youth, and it had been like that ever since; she gave me a low bed, so that I wouldn't have to fall far...to put it in her way. She is the sort that would make any kind of sacrifice, just to see that all goes well; not that I was reckless, but being the only one she had, has its point ...I could remember sometimes she would remind me that she was only protecting me, and we would talk that for sometime, one thing was that we talked about the most intimate things, not that she was trying to let me know that I was the only one she cherished, but it was something more than that. The neighbours who were never tired of talking would say awful things about us, especially that mother's religious beliefs were nothing that she had ever boasted of, in fact she believed in the pagan rites...in them she found all the peace she wanted, for that she had stopped going to church, she was brought up to be a catholic...sometime after I don't know what happened, but she began to speak of them with contempt, it was from her that I became aware of the hypocrisy of religion...especially the churches that are found in our way... and of course there are all kinds of them, and the people would blindly sing the hymns that never meant anything to them; just like the catholics even the priests sometimes, when they are asked to explain certain things which are written in Latin, they would just blubber away and then admit that there were certain things that could not be explained. Of course for us, the Pope was miles away, and what's more, maybe the man had never heard of them...in Africa; the white priests would go to the strain of making certain lame excuses, but the African religious would be frank, and if one insisted, they would take the attitude of a tyrant. It was shortly after such decision that she decided not to have anything to do with the church, yes...it wasn't her long illness, I cuold feel that it was a decision which was much more personal than that.

Marie was sitting in the bed smiling, and the darkness of her face shone from the brightness of her teeth, her legs were crossed, of course she was always in the habit of wearing my pyjamas which were too big for her, especially in the sleeves, which she had rolled up to her elbows. I slipped out to refill the kettle for the morning, but the tap was dry, and when I got back, she jumped up and wrapped her arms around my neck, letting me know that if ever I thought of leaving her, she wouldn't know what to do with herself, so I advised her that she would send the entire force of Rabbit after me...that was the name of the Englishman who was the head of the police department. Not that it was his real name but the Africans are fond of calling Europeans by some name or other they found appropriate. She stopped talking, and then lifted her face up towards mine,...yes, my neighbour was there...it was himself that was moving the jangling of bells...spasmodic and so was the hoofing of the floor. It was a

queer thing, he had to be serenaded, and this sort of lullaby would last till the early hours of the morning. I told her not to be afraid, in fact she didn't understand what I was saying...No. I said only the goat moving about...she wanted to know whether I was losing my senses, but I was quick to let her know that the man living opposite had a goat...and that may be the animal was still munching cassava leaves, that had been left for him to pass the night with. Okoro is like that, he doesn't bother anybody and nobody worries him, the only person he ever spoke to and even regarded as someboby was mother, and that was a long time ago, his time is too precious!

He respected mother, and that was like a kind of silent gratitude..the old man never spoke...Oh...yes, we once had a little chat together, and that was a long time ago...he wanted to know if the war was still going on...I was put off for sometime, as there were wars going on all the time...I couldn't answer him, but then he put in by letting me know the one they started in Europe. I wasn't to crack my head about that, but being polite, I told him as far as I knew those people had called it off for the time being. To hell with them he said...they are a useless lot, he continued, the types we see here are just a bunch of rascals...I agreed with him, then added that I didn't care for them myself; he picked my hands in his and before he left, he said something to the effect that they must be like that in their countries; I watched him, not about what we talked, but the way his body disappeared into the well of the stars. Yes the hoof of the goat has been echoing in the darkness of the stairs for years; everybody used to talk about him and his goat as I said he was one for deaf ears, he just ignored everybody ... the only words he would utter for a long time would be to his goat...calling the animal names and then pulling the leash away, sometimes it would be the animal that would be pulling him. I went out hoping to get some water from the first floor, I could hear the constant hoofing of the floor by the animal, it was something annoying and on the other hand, as religious as the distance of a Fairground music. Yes, when one is approaching it with the family, the bustling of the children and everybody is excited, even the father himself at this time there is no other music that can rival the Fairground music for its orgy ... its original religiosity; I turned the head of the tap and for some time I stood there waiting for the water ... yes it came down hitting the vessel with a distant sound; when I got up again she was fast asleep and it was the squeaking of the door that woke her up. I apologised, then said, walking away to the window, that I would go down tomorrow, meaning in the store ... a place where mother kept all her hangings and shakings, she nodded something to the effect that I must have said that before; I did not bother to reply, since it would be better to let her continue sleeping; in fact, there was something more interesting to do, than trying to tell her that she was not right and all that; I could see the reflection of the street-lamps on the deserted pavement, watching the two dogs as they played about in the middle of the road, that male chased the female and then dragged her back to where they started; the bitch stood still and kept on twisting her body as her companion moved around sniffing her body, and then jumped on her and they stayed glued together for sometime; of course in our part it is a common day affair, and nobody would bother

about them, maybe it was the solitude and suffering of the two animals that tore me like that ... and the incident clarity of the large street ... I ambled away to Marie and watched her in the bed; she was sleeping like as if I was beside her. Of course, in the morning, other things would happen. When I slipped beside, she woke and said that she was thirsty, I tipped some water into the tumbler for her, she handed me back the glass. It was late she peeled off the pyjamas and exposed the contours of her bare skin to my caresses and the night...the tranquillity. I lay down with my eyes open, thinking about nothing. We talked about marrying, it was her that started it all of course I encouraged her in saying it would be better to start it all over in the morning. it was the closeness of our bodies that evoked her sentimentality. She began to accuse me of cowardice and evasion, that was after I had tried to mention the fact that there would be no problem but then I was quick to remind her of her parents ... Her aunt wouldn't like the idea. "All right," I said ... "As long as it would make you happy." I could feel the unreality of my voice, though I didn't mean to be like that, but when I am forced to go against my wish, it would just come out without thinking or respecting the person who is addressing me.

"You're supposed ... to love me" ... in fact the past tense hit me in the ear, almost seeing the flatness of the whole thing.

I told her that I would do anything to please her. Oh...it wasn't enough, she turned her head away, I could hear her breathing heavily as my eyes and forehead became heavy with sleep. When I got up, the sun was already in the room ... from the window, but she was soundly asleep, I couldn't continue, I had to go to the toilet...bits of light streamed in from the window, the sun fell on her face, I watched her as the door squeaked behind me ... it was something like a Bible, I couldn't stay for a minute in the room without reading a book or browsing something literary, it was always the anthology of N'jo ... I opened the "Rising Day ... that comes again once more ... to the skies and the night clothed in my mother knee ..." ...Like most African poets he writes from the heart of Africa, that only an African can feel ... the others complexed in their banality never interested me. When I turned round, she was winking her eyes, she rubbed them and asked me if I had just got up, but I told her that it had been sometime ... "Ooooooh," she wimpered. Pulling herself, almost thrusting her hands apart, her full bosom seized a chestful of air ... and her breasts just touching me on the neck sensitively, she avoided the window as she grabbed her slip, and in no time her figure was cellophanish, and her brassiere accentuated the points on her breast ... hard looking like.

"Always reading poetry ... don't you get tired of reading the same book over and over ..." I did not answer, instead, I put the book on the table. and the clock was just going round to seven, and the goat was tapping and the pimp living by me, that is, one of my neigbours, was moving about, I couldn't say whether he was in the habit of getting up so late, anyway, I woudn't know ... he was always coming late, moving about until the early hours of the morning.

Morning—the cool wind rushing through the window, and the bells of the goat, occasional thudding were common things. She wanted to know something about the Recession of Kipling. I was happy she mentioned that, because she

wasn't the type to meddle with such things, anyway I told her what I thought, yes; she could see that I was biased; she tried to change the conversation, by making certain references about the old man and his goat. It took me sometime before I could reply, not that I was taken aback by the sudden change, it was just one of those things, sometimes one is late to respond to certain things, though the simplicity of it would be obvious.

I just have been feeling happy, about what ... well, it was something beyond me, maybe that is why I didn't reply to her question immediately. As the goat would not stop, she couldn't help mentioning the fact that it is annoying, it was stupid, I thought to myself, what's the difference, the animal is doing something that it is fond of ... I continued muttering things like that to myself, until I eventually realised that I hadn't answered her question. I told her stories that were popular around here, about the old cap ... "People could be stupid ... you know." I agreed with her and then added that if he was happy like that, I am all for his continuing living his life, and what's more, he had never troubled anybody.

It was in the dry season, and the sun peeling the tar from the soil. making it naked under the crunching footsteps, the air dry and salty, the old man had gone to town on one of his sprees.

For a while, I couldn't tell whether she was there or not, but one thing I knew was that I did not hear anybody come in ... or even the door opened, it was the sort of peace that sometimes rigs the morning to the bustling of the day. Then I could feel the shape of her body lying almost on mine, and something rather unique moved across my back, it was her bosom again menacing me; it was a unique sensation which really bothered me.

The swishing of her cotton dress woke me up and when I turned I could see that the top part of her body was nude and the colour of wine, the dye of her nature, like the coarseness of the African sun ... I imagined the colour of her nakedness which was clothed in her skin the night before ... I began to debate to myself ... but it wasn't anything that took fruit, possibly. other things that had bothered me continued to obliterate the vanity of it all. With her head hung on my shoulders, she wanted to know, if I was happy about last night, and then her eyes lit, in her particular way, I knew what she meant, she has a way of focusing her eyes. I wouldn't say that it was frightening, one has to get into the habit. No, it was no bother at all, instead, I put my arms around her, the weight of her mouth rested on mine with her long chiselled tongue ... she took her eyes off me, and then let me know that I was worse than a devil. I asked her if she would be going to work on Monday, she didn't answer me immediately, but she repeated her first remark, and then added something to the effect that anyway I would be going to heaven after all; we laughed, but something tore our attention off our little amusement, that was the swiss-clock in Okoro's room was ringing. the goat must have been asleep or dead. because the bell couldn't be heard, Marie wanted to know. if goats sleep like human beings ... but I told her that as far as I know, there was no reason to prevent them from sleeping. By then, I could guess the time, it must have been about eight, because the sun was shining bright. and the spots were visible, that is, if one looks

straight at it. She still wanted to talk, but I wasn't too prepared for that, since I would much like to see her off to work, though she does have plenty of time as most of the offices do not start work until half-eight or thereof. She wanted some tea, and she got down to make it, whilst I kept myself occupied with fleeting thoughts. I could hear a voice vaguely, recalling one thing now, and at another instance, something else I couldn't make head or tail of what she was saying. I would say that she wasn't being lucid, the fault really could have been mine, since I wasn't too attentive, but then as it was earlier still I couldn't force her to leave. The memories of last night still lingered in my head, and it was a crisis, why should one want to go by the cemetry at night? I couldn't give her any definite answer, except that my only excuse, which obviously sounded lame in my ears, and the point was that if we were forced there was nothing to be done about it. I wasn't being superstitious, but being in such an environment, has its points. The Racecourse Cemetry ... the dead are not dead ... those who are dead, are not in the soil, their hands have not been soiled neither have their sight smothered by the earth; they come back to us anchored in the bosom of the women, buried in the thighs of the women and their memories projected in the new-borns. Their white hair and their greying beards rustle in the dried leaves that pave the earth, and the night that echoes their wisdom, is the Africa that nobody knows. Ancestors laboured into the rivers that join the crowd of ancestors in the oceans. "The Oro ..." she said; I told her that I had been thinking of joining the society, she was shocked. I could see that it was the old half-baked Christianity coming out of her again; with our Christians, it was like a kind of contagion, that really hasn't gone too deep, and the flexibility of the human-self seems to offer the only explanation. This didn't prevent her from letting me know how she felt about it, but of course I had no ear for another argument. There was a light tap on the door, she made no effort to open it, instead she lowered her voice to a whispering tone that gave the impression outside, that we were busy. The noise died down and then she continued talking with the same effort, stressing each tone as if I was deaf ... "Yes, the Oro," she said.

# MALANGATANA

BY JULIAN BEINART

On the corrugated iron walls of shanties outside Lourenco Marques there are paintings of fowls, football players and butterflies; on the plaster walls of the Western Native township outside Johannesburg there are rising suns and circular blobs of earth color. They are part of a decorative folk art, spontaneous and anonymous, with no signature to identity them as the work of particular individuals.

The work of the musicians and writers of these and the other townships of Southern Africa have nothing to do with this folk art. Their is a struggle for singularity, an individual stamp, a personal synthesis of their own experience which is rooted deeply in an African past and at the same time exposed to the new contacts of a different cultural environment.

There are few visual artists engaged in this adventure; either they thrive on corny postcard traditionalism or they lose themselves head-over-heels in their object awe of Europeanisation. They are left with neither the universality of their own folk art nor with an identity of their own. They are the half-hearted by-products of culture contacts.

In itself the achievement of a personal identity is a difficult task. It is rendered even more so by the fact that there are virtually no facilities for the training of African painters, sculptors or architects in Southern Africa nor their practice.

The painting of Valente Goenha Malangatana, a 24-year old artist who works in Lourenco Marques, the capital of Mocambique, are individual statements, which have little connection with decorative folk art. He has been working as a full time painter for less than two years, and has already produced a great deal of work which, like the work of those artists who have achieved a powerful indentity through a strong personal vision, expresses Malagatana's own position with unusual artistic vigour and clarity.

Malangatana's background is an immensely important part of his work.

Luckily we need not guess at it. He has written down the story of his life and I reproduce here an abridged version of it. He writes:

"I was born in Marracuene, in the Regedoria Magaia, under Chief Diqua Magaia on the 6th June 1936, on Sunday morning.

According to what my mother says, I was always with her and always did with her the work she used to do, that is: going with her to the field, carrying water, going to the bush to cut wood for the cooking, picking mushrooms for lunch or dinner.

For these reasons I was almost like a girl...It was only when I started school and got used to my companions that I improved, but I was a cry-baby and very soft and did not know how to fight, and I was even nicknamed Malenga, or girl...

My mother came from another part of the country to marry my father.

In her homeland, according to her and confirmed by me, because I remember having gone there with her when I was already able to see and remember what I saw, the girls were very keen on art work; even after they married they continued to do ornamental work, which is usually done with beads on calabashes, belts for women and men, wide necklaces for women and babies, and also bracelets made of beads for witchdoctors. My mother not only knew how to do this but also how to sharpen teeth...

Beside this she did tattoing on stomachs and faces. She used to make sewing thread from pineapple and sisal leaves.

I went to school in 1942 because my mother wished it, while my father was in South Africa working in the mines...At this school in the Swiss Mission I had a very good teacher. This teacher loved teaching and he also had a great gift for drawing, basket-making and other handwork...Here in this school I first saw pictures in books, but I did not believe they were drawings, and also saw some drawings done by the teacher's brother who had already finished studying at this school and was in the town...After I had passed from the first grade to the second and from the second to the third, this school was closed, unfortunately for us all because the teacher left.

Two years later, that is in 1947, I went to a Catholic school which I did not like so much as the other. I had no ability, but in spite of that I did not stop drawing on my own, chiefly on the sandy paths for want of paper. During this time at school, being together with several boys, I learnt to play some football and other games...

A bad period for me. My mother went completely mad while my father was on his way back from South Africa, arriving a few months later. It grieved me very much when she became like that. It happened one night when I and the children of another wife of my father's had been as usual to play some distance from our house where we lived far from everybody.

When we returned that evening as I came into the house where I slept with my mother, I heard a voice calling me. It was the voice of my half-brother, and my mother was also shouting: "My son, come to me for I am dying, your brother was killed because he was the cleverest in this house and was envied by this woman who used to call him "white man," pointing as she spoke to another wife of my father's...My aunt found a witchdoctor who took my mother in, and she stayed there having treatment for a long time...I was staying with my aunt and was attending the Catholic school...On religious holidays I used to decorate the house according to what I saw in the Church and she used to get very annoyed when I lit candles inside the house because she was afraid the house would

burn down. So I made a shack outside where I could do everything I liked, where I hung holy pictures and other photographs which I cut out of magazines and also some drawings I made of various religious images which I copied out of books and catechisms...at this time my mother returned to where she was married, and my father went away again without leaving anything for me. However, when we got to South Africa he sent me two pairs of trousers — they were the same but were labelled, one for me and one for my half-brother...I then came to the city. When I arrived here, I worked as a children's servant alternating with going back home to teach in the Catholic school, when I earned only 40 escudos (ten shillings) per month, which to me was a lot. I helped my mother with the little I had, while she fed me.....

Returning to the city, I gave up teaching and went to work as a Coloured household where fortunately I was well-treated but, where, unfortunately, I had no time to go to school, although it was very near.....

In June 1953, I went to work at the Lourenco Marques Club, after a short rest at home, during which time I decided to go with the girl who would not leave my heart, Cicilia Matias Machiana.

In the Lourenco Marques Club I started by working as a ball-boy and cook for the servants, and I began learning English...During this time I used to draw a lot when I saw many drawings done to decorate the rooms for dances.....

...And I studied, I went to a good night-school with a good teacher, so that my drawing improved and my pleasure in drawing increased...I was drawing in charcoal and painting in oils, and everyone who saw my work and ideas admired them and encouraged me...I painted furiously, rather forgetting to visit my parents and my wife...

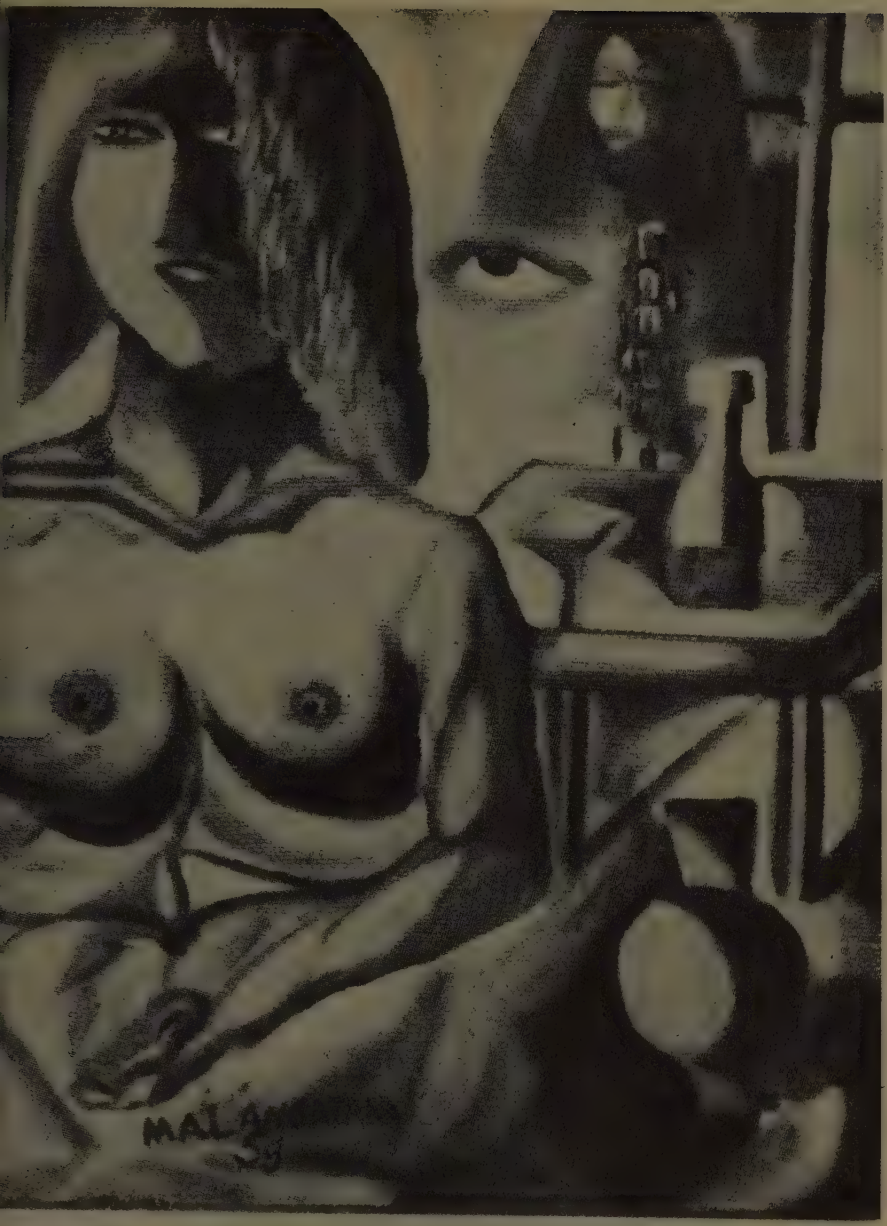
A few months later, in October 1959, I was discovered painting at night by the architect Miranda Guedes. He admired my pictures and exchanged words with me...At this time too, this architect used to buy paintings from me to help me.

...Before the end of 1960 the architect told me that he would like to help and arranged for me to leave the Club and give up my contract at the end of January 1960, so I could work all the time ... He offered me a studio and monthly allowance, for which I and my family thank him from the bottom of our hearts.

In the studio I started receiving visits from students...Now and then I wrote poems, as I had already been doing before, and these, and this autobiography, I wrote in Portuguese — they have been translated by Mrs. Dorothy Guedes and Mrs. Philippa Rumsey.

I was always different from those who saw me wasting night after night drawing with a pencil trying to tell stories by sketching on the paper.

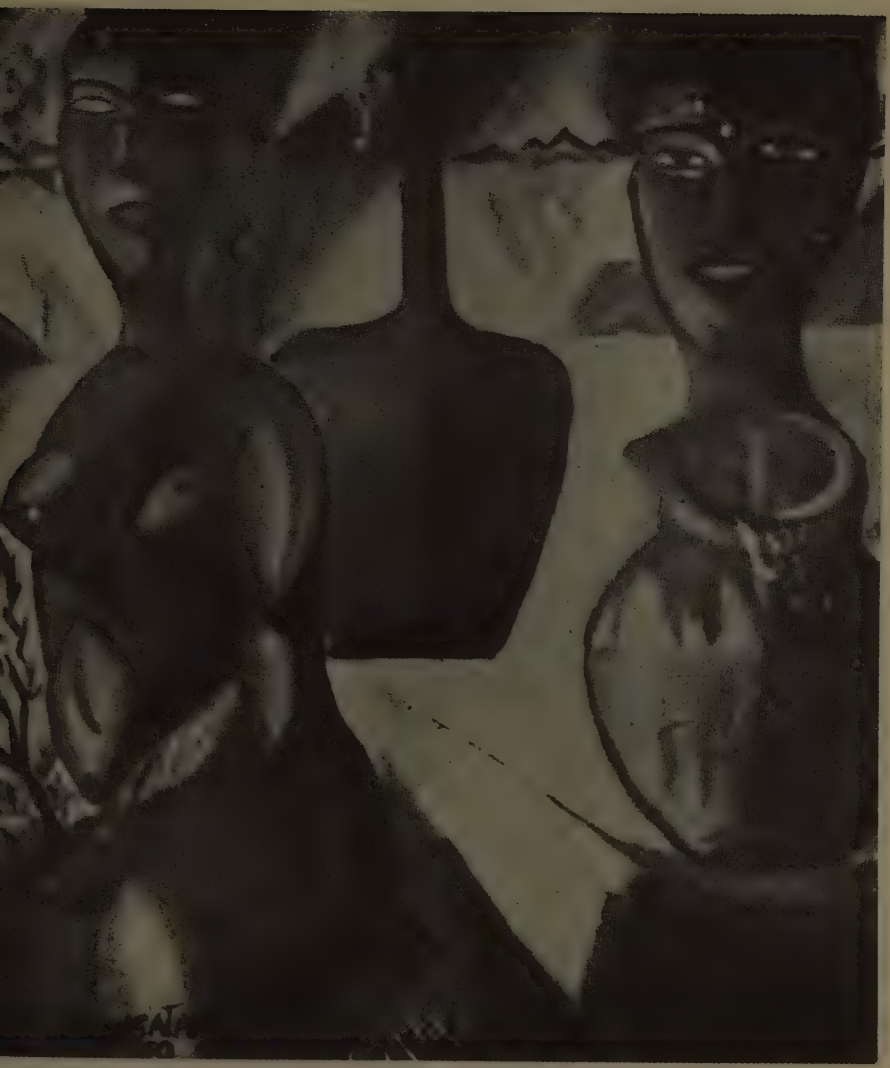
When I come to the town there were always people who attacked me for painting and drawing because in the view of many it was just playing about - indeed it was playing, but seriously, was always my reply to those who attacked me.

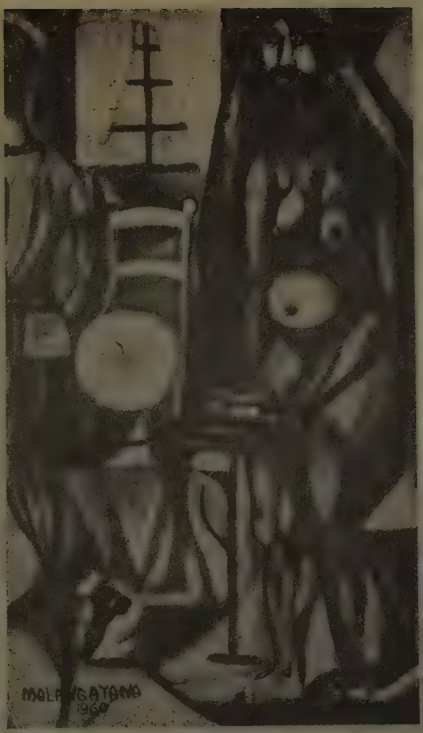


ALANGATANA

1 THE DREAM OF THE WEEPING WOMAN

2 TOWN SQUARE
3 THE EXPOSURE OF THE EVIL
4 THE TREE OF FRIENDSHIP

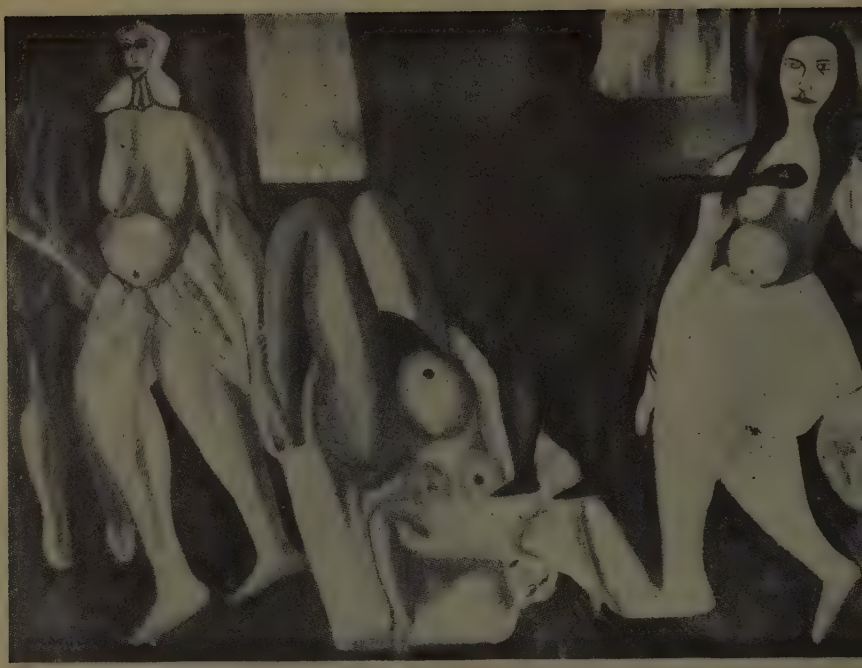




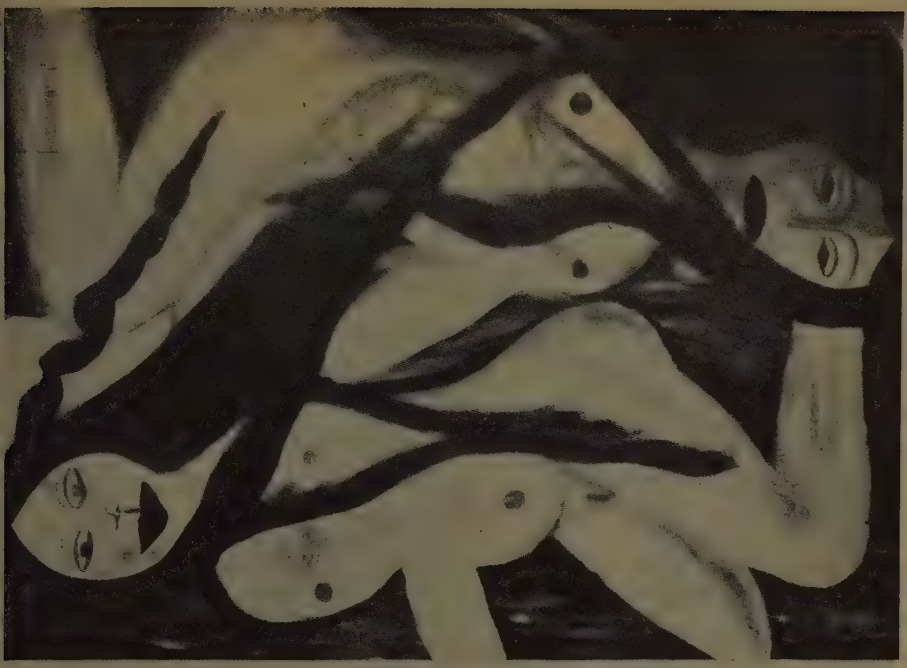
THE STORY OF THE LETTER IN THE HAT

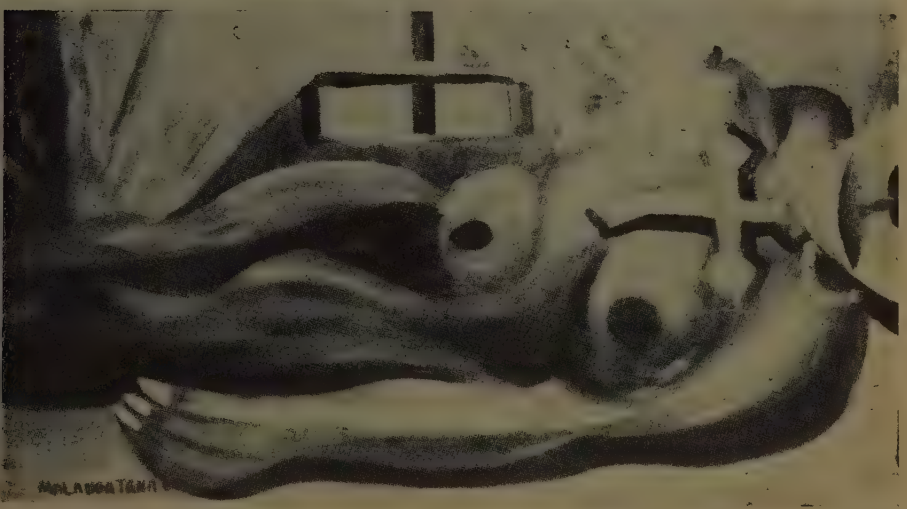
"This is the story of two lovers. They used to correspond by means of the woman's husband's hat, as her lover was the husband's companion at work. The woman writes the letter and then puts it in the husband's hat before he leaves. The husband arrives at work and puts the hat on the hat-rack. The lover knowing which was the husband's hat, takes out the letter, reads it, answers, and puts it in the hat. After work, the husband goes back home and when he arrives, puts the hat on the hat-rack. The wife waits for some time, and when her husband is not around, takes the letter, answers it and puts her reply in the hat. This usually takes place between two and three in the morning, when the husband is dead with sleep. And the husband at seven o'clock delivers the letter to his wife's lover. This went on for a long time. But one day another man, who was jealous of the lover's good fortune, and who used to see the letters being taken and put back in the husband's hat, told him about it. So the husband instead of going straight to work the next day, waited in the next room to see what would happen. Sure enough, his suspicions were well founded. And when he went home, he was feeling very sorry for himself. So he pretended to sleep and waited until three o'clock, by which time he knew his wife's letter would be written and placed in the hat. He then got up, and without his wife noticing anything, read the letter. He then felt even more sorry for himself, especially as he had himself been the post office. He killed himself by taking a tin of D.D.T. He left a note saying: 'Luisa: Good-bye forever'."

ADELANTE
RA SIEMPRE



6 THE CASTING OF PELIS
7 THE TEMDIATION OF THE CLER

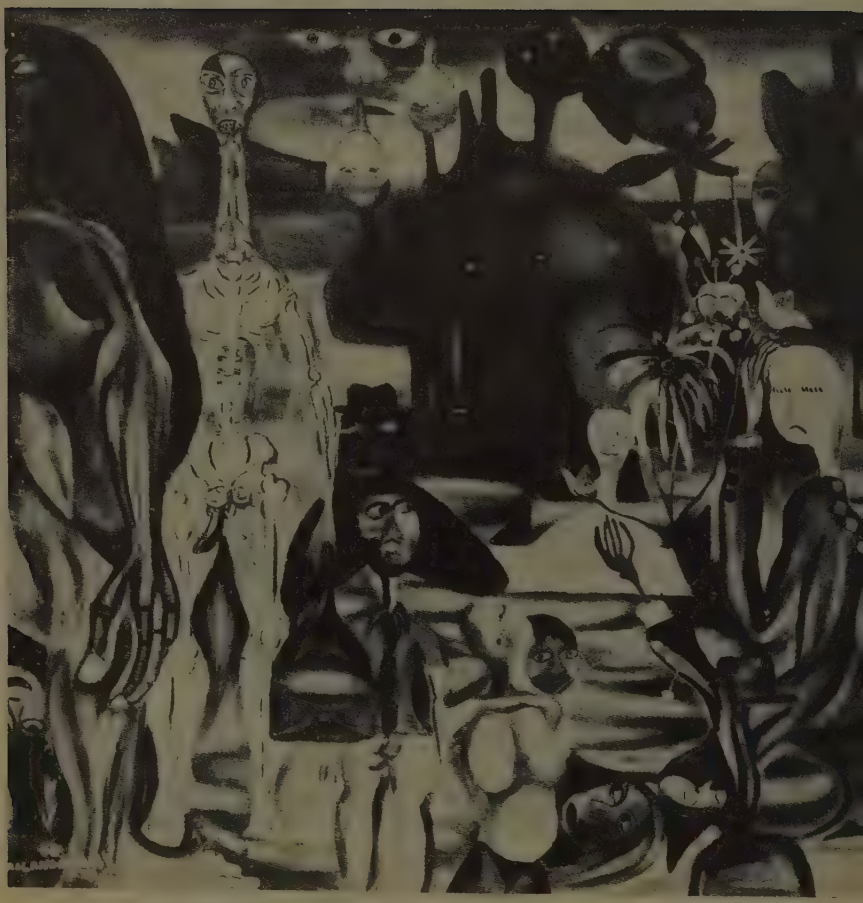




8 TWO FRIENDS
9 NUDE WITH CRUCIFIX

10 THE WOMAN WHO CRIES

PRINCESA



12 THE SECRET VOYAGE

Since I do paint for pleasure nor as a profession but because I love art and poetry, apart from this poetry is art written on white paper without colour and in repeated letters but poetry in a picture has life, smell and movement also...and I will even say that wherever I am, I shall be painting..."

Malangatana's background as so vividly described in his own writings, probably differs little from the life-patterns of many other young Africans. Were he only an intersting product of events and an accurate recorder of them, his work would arleady be of interest to students of Africa. This however, would hardly make of him an artist nor lift his work beyond the level of mere documentary.

What sets Malangatana aside is his ability to translate the happenings of his life into symbols which are artistically valid and which communicate to the widest audience. His paintings and poetry become powerful commentaries not only on particular happenings of his own life, but also on issues of universal importance — faith and love, jealousy, hate, mysticism an death.

Sometimes Malangatana forms these events into stories of possible and vaguely possible happenings, in From's sense myths — stories "which express, in symbolic language, religious and philosophical ideas experiences of the soul."

The painting the exposure of the evil one tells of the technique used to determine the guilty one by the administration of a potion to the suspects. They start talking deliriously and the guilty one sticks his tongue out. By agreement between chief, witchdoctors and community, the guilty one has his ear or finger cut off.

THE TREE OF FRIENDSHIP tells of jealousy and love between two women. In Malangatana's own words; "There were two women married to the same man and one night they became angry with each other. They hit each other and the one cut the leg of the other with a kitchen knife. The one who cut was the one who was most jealous. And the cut one, in spite of being wounded, said this to her friend: 'I am going away and I am taking my love with me to plant it another place.' The one who had cut, full of repentance went to get medicines but they were of no avail because the cut one was too sad. In that way they were separated. The plant is the plant of love."

These story paintings are acted out in one picture. In THE LOVE STORY OF THE LETTER IN THE HAT Malangatana is not satisfied with compressing the time sequence into one statement, and he uses a quartet of paintings to expalin the plot. The story has three major actors; the paintings contain two of them at a time in each of the paintings. One is always active, the other passive, and it is interesting to note how Malangatana paints each expressively to suit their roles. The wife in Picture 1 is the dutiful, peace-loving woman, carefully painted; in Pictures 2 and 3 she is a voluptuous noude with crude, fiowing hair, freely painted; and finally in Picture 4 she has become a dematerialized body, a head floating on a vague whiteness. To counterpoint the goings-on, Malangatana uses a clock to tell the passing of time, a letter to develop the story and odd furniture to localise the events.

For many of his paintings Malangatana has no specific story in mind.

Often these are painting of rituals involving witchcraft and violence, at other times of love and at times, less sublimely, even of an extraction in a dentist's

chair. In the ritual paintings like THE CASTING OF SPELLS, THE TEMPATATION OF THE CLERK and PRINCESA, few of the participators are identifiable — possibly a witchdoctor in green Machiavellian uniform or brightly clad tsotsi-boys from the city - and most are depicted as strangely universal figures. They might be African women, but they have long flowing hair; they might at other times be witchdoctors but they have Christian crosses on their necks. Malangatana seems to find no inherent contradiction in this. He seems able to avoid making those distinctions that exist so painfully between cultures and one senses in him the strong cross currents that must cause daily conflict to so many people. His paintings are for him the means of resolution, of showing not those things that commonly set people apart, but those that integrate and belong to all.

He probably does things quite unconciously. It is much more likely that his major concern is the visual structure of the painting, and when he uses long flowing hair, it is partly due to his great natural preoccupation with hair ("Woman's hair shall be the blanket"), but largely due to his need to tie the painting together and free the heads from the bodies. In TWO FRIENDS not only the hair but the breasts ("Woman's breast shall be my pillow"), eyes ("Woman's eye shall open up for me the way to Heaven") and belly ("Woman's belly shall give birth to me up there") perform the same structural function. He uses nipples and navels as Kandinsky used points in ascendance. NUDE WITH CRUCIFIX belongs to this group of paintings. It is a glowing, orange-red picture with wet brush-strokes marking the sensuous contours of the levitated body. Again we see forms conspicuously reiterating themselves, notably the crucifix which is transposed into the cross of window mullions and powerfully positioned in the centre of the picture.

For me this work evokes strong religious associations; possibly not unnatural in the painting of a nude figure with a crucifix. But there is no vertical, thin, tensioned male body - instead Malangatana has painted a horizontal, nubile, compressed female nude. The head is pressed onto the body eliminating any neck, and at this point of maximum pressure, the crucifix springs and rests between the trinity of breast and breast-like stomach. It is a painting of classic simplicity, dignified, massive yet floating.

Works of this kind show Malangatama's combination of naivete and sophistication at their most striking; like the work of the naive painters, his paintings drive real power hovering between these two opposites.

Malangatana has his own brand if surrealism. It has little to do with the intellectual games of Western European surrealist painters. It is a plastic interpretation of a way of life in which mysticism and fantasy play a significant functional role.

Most of his works have this particular surreal flavour, but it is only in his latest paintings, of which THE SECRET VOYAGE is an excellent example, that Malangatana paints a true dream picture in which the individual elements are in themselves concrete and real, but which together for man make an impossible and fantastic situation. The earlier paintings are symbolic translations of the mysterious but actual events which occur inside and around the painter.

In his latest work Malangatana has taken the process to its logical end by giving these symbols a freer and more vital life in the completely surreal world of his painting. His work seems to be moving towards a greater liberty, and this development after only two years full-time work by a young man with virtually no formal training, is indeed remarkable.

If Malangatana has had a short career as a painter, he has hardly begun his work as a poet. As in his painting. he works inspirationally, often turning out reams of work in one session. Some of the poems like Magaica and the poems about the Coalbrook mine disaster, are descriptions of what are everyday events in the Portuguese African community where so many men leave home to work in South African mines. Other poems like WOMAN tend to be less descriptive than purely symbolic, and have close ties with many of the paintings.

Malangatana has recently had his first one-man exhibition. His work as presented here, a beginning, shows a rare intuitive artistic sensibility. Like few others in Southern Africa, he has used his work to come to terms with the dualities and conflicts of his position; and instead of these remaining as drawbacks, or him tossing away one thing for another on the advice of self-styled judges, he has embraced them all and turned them to profit. His task is to retain this vision while developing both as person and painter, and his position as a young artist in Africa is to be watched with the greatest interest. Already he is one of the few members of what promises to be an exciting new generation of African artists.

# TWO POEMS

BY VALENTE MALANGATANA

## WOMAN

In the cool waters of the river
we shall have fish that are huge
which shall give the sign of
the end of the world perhaps
because they will make an end of woman
woman who adorns the fields
woman who is the fruit of man.

The flying fish makes an end of searching
because woman is the gold of man
when she sings she even seems
like the fado-singer's well-tuned guitar
when she dies, I shall cut off
her hair to deliver me from sin.

Woman's hair shall be the blanket
over my coffin when another Artist
calls me to Heaven to paint me
Woman's breasts shall be my pillow
woman's eye shall open up for me the way to heaven
woman's belly shall give birth to me up there
and woman's glance shall watch me
as I go up to Heaven.

## TO THE ANXIOUS MOTHER

Into your arms I came
when you bore me, very anxious
you, who were so alarmed
at that monstrous moment
fearing that God might take me.
Everyone watched in silence
to see if the birth was going well
everyone washed their hands
to be able to receive the one who came from Heaven
and all the women were still and afraid.
But when I emerged
from the place where you sheltered me so long
at once I drew my first breath
at once you cried out with joy
the first kiss was my grandmother's.
And she took me at once to the place
where they kept me, hidden away
everyone was forbidden to enter my room
because everyone smelt bad
and I all fresh, fresh
breathed gently, wrapped in my napkins.
But grandmother, who seemed like a madwoman,
always looking and looking again
because the flies came at me
and the mosquitoes harried me
God who also watched over me
was my old granny's friend.

# Because of the King of France

BY ADRIENNE CORNELL

When my brother and I were children we had a cousin who ran away to the Virgin Islands. His name was Sidney.

It was a great joke. Often at night when we'd be sitting telling ghost stories my brother would giggle and say, "suddenly from the haunted house there appeared Sidney back from the Virgin Islands". My mother who would be sitting embroidering criss-crosses on towels, in absurd solemnity never failed to say, "I wonder why on earth that boy went to the Virgin Islands? Of all the places in the world". This stately perplexity always collapsed my brother and me further into wild giggles that lasted at least a quarter of an hour. One time when my brother and I were sitting in the attic playing monopoly Sidney's father came to see us. He was a thin little Negro in denim overalls and a great cap. He drove a mustard colored moving van and looked very sad. My brother and I came to the top of the stairs and peeped at him. I thought he was one of my father's patients (my father was a doctor). When he left my mother said the poor man was so unhappy, his wife dead and Sidney gone. She told my father that night and they talked about it. My father said he would go and see him. But my brother and I rarely saw Mr. Carter. He lived on the other side of town.

One day many years later, when I was in college, I was in a department store. It was a Saturday afternoon in September and I believe I was buying something silly, a cashmere sweater or socks with my initials on them (they were popular that year), when I felt someone watching me, I turned. And staring at me was a forlorn thin stooped figure. I knew right away that it was Sidney: the sallow skin, the elongated head, the black spiritual eyes. But he was so much older than I remembered. He looked almost thirty. He wore a battered hat, skimpy cotton trousers and a baggy poplin jacket. I didn't give him a chance to speak but unconsciously put down my packages on the counter, looked at him saying in pefect imitation of my mother.

"Sidney," I demanded as only a spoiled college girl can, "why on earth did you run away to the Virgin Islands. Of all places." And then as if to atone for my impudence I hastily added, "and you who could play the piano so well" He looked at me. not in the least humiliated by my rudeness and answered in a clear sweet earnestness which I have never forgotten, "Because of the King of France."

I went back to school that fall. I was very happy in those days and never thought of anything except my cashmere sweaters. I doubt if Sidney or our encounter ever crossed my mind.

Then one day toward the Christmas holidays a letter came. My room-mate and I had a joke of taking each other's mail and gluing it to the ceiling. When I came in for lunch I saw a grey envelope waiting for me there. It was late afternoon before I got the desk chair and the umbrella and took the letter down, examining the tiny squarish handwriting and the dim postmark reading St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. For some reason I clutched at the letter then suddenly threw it across the room, went out and left it. I wondered what was in that letter. I could not explain it but I did not want to open that damn thing. Perhaps I would go back and throw it in the wastepaper basket. Inexplicably against my will I began to remember things about Sidney. His mother had died. Willa was her name. She was a distant cousin of my father's. (I hadn't liked their house because it smelled of turnip greens. I had told my mother and she said dear you mustn't be like that, those are your father's cousins. But I hadn't liked being cousins to poor people. My father was a doctor.) Then there had been a girl named Sylvia. My mother had seen her once at a piano recital where Sidney played, later recalling her she said the girl had looked deathly . . . very homely. She was a Jew with kinky blonde hair and according to Willa Sidney's first love. They studied music together at the Cleveland Institute where Sidney had gotten a scholarship. (It was after his first year there that Willa died.) And right after that that all that trouble began. Mr. Carter came to see my father late one night and had Sidney with him. Mr. Carter was crying. But Sidney sat almost immobile and withdrawn, repeating over and over, it was the whole world let me in, finally the whole world let me in. It seemed that Sylvia Klein was pregnant with Sidney's baby and her father had come to the house and before Mr. Carter could reach him had beat Sidney in the face with a lead pipe. My father asked him did he know the seriousness of such a thing. But Sidney only sat then looked directly into my father's eyes, "Did you know there's love in the world," he said. "Did you know it?" "Did you know that

even though mama's gone there's love in this world." And the next thing I heard Sidney was dismissed from his beloved Institute and Mr. Klein who was a little Jewish grocer took his family to Sandusky.

Of course my mother didn't believe it. How on earth she would exclaim. Sidney, of all people, so intelligent, so artistic, "always playing the piano," she'd add bewilderingly. It seemed impossible to me; too embarrassing to even discuss with my brother.

"Willa's to blame," my father said. "She's dead and in her grave but she's to blame for all this. She babied that boy so, making him think he was a genius, put all those ideas into his head about him being a piano player, giving him music lessons, sending him to the Institute. Why that boy thinks he's white and he's colored. He's nothing but a poor little colored boy. I feel sorry for him Mildred" (that was my mother's name). "It is a shame," my mother replied.

I came back to the room that night. The letter was still there under the bed where I had thrown it. I picked it up and looked at it for a long time. Then I went over and latched the door and sat down at the desk, took out a cigarette and read. This is what it said.

It was because of the King of France I came away. You see after I left the Institute I went to live at Versailles. Louis XIV asked me to. Chopin was due to arrive soon. Of course Louis XIV was not a Negro. Neither was Chopin or Mr. Rosen my teacher at the Institute. But I am. And everyone at the Institute knows that Negroes are people who were brought to America from Africa and Africa is a black jungle where black pygmies with rings in their noses sit banging drums and distorting their pygmy bodies. Everyone at the Institute knows that Negroes are stupid people with woollen hair who shuffle and say Lawsy me and I gwine and black. Very black. Everyone except Sylvia Klein. And if I were not a Negro then her father would not yell at her when I walked her to the store that day. Her father would not scream at her about the niggers, niggers, everywhere and the kinkiness of nigger hair and the flatness of nigger noses and the blackness of their skin. Nobody would yell. And my mother would not keep saying to me, Sidney baby, it's the Lord's will you're black and she's white. If he had wanted you white and living on Rigde Street he would have made it so.

"But I love her. I love her mama," I cry. "I'm sixteen years old and I know what I feel."

"You can't go against the Lord, Sidney," she says. "You can't go against Him."

"I love her," I cry.

But all that was past and now I had my life at the Palace. I lived in a white walled salon with a balcony overlooking the Palace gardens. I was happy there. Myself and the Royal Family when one day Louis XIV came to see me. He had been away for a long while He came striding into the rooms and asked me to play a concert for him that Sunday at the Hall of Mirrors. I agreed. For we were great friends. As we stood talking on the balcony overlooking the fountains the King went on to tell me of the concert. I would play anything I chose. And also playing would be the amusing Monsieur Philipe. He had commanded him. I had not heard of this Philipe before and mentioned this

to the King. He's an inconsequential fellow, he shrugged and with that the King disappeared off to the Throne Room or perhaps hunting. I practiced that week, read my books and composed pieces for Sylvia for even at the Palace I had not been able to forget the sorrow. The King had never visited me but that week he came in often to remark about the amusing Monsieur Philipe. It seemed he was an ugly fellow, small, stunted, sallow skinned with a large nose and besides he was a Corsican, and spent hours in his room cursing his vile Corsican face and his stunted body. And besides the most amusing part he was in love with his daughter. The vile stunted thing loved his daughter. Louis XIV giggled. Then Sunday came and the Concert in the Hall of Mirrors I played well and the Royal Family applauded. I was a great success. Then Monsieur Philipe came on.

He was ugly. And crippled too. He limped onto the stage and turned to us. His face was hideous. He looked like a filthy beggar. When he turned to look at the Princess she averted her face in disgust. He seated his crippled body at the piano and began to play. I saw tears in his eyes. And he played. And from those ugly fingers came all the longings, all the tenderness, all the loveliness that comes from dreaming alone in shuttered rooms that smell of turnips, all the fierceness that comes from being convicted to disgrace and inequity by God's will .... the rage, the annihilation, the grief of race and the unchangingness, the eternity of it all.

The King of France laughed.

# JAWAD TALALI

POEMS

i can no longer think:
facing a little wall
of un touch able rock
i sit in the sun
the burning spot of uncertain pause
many a day
all along gay
sun has risen & fallen
surprising no body.
but to day
he may
not rise & pass over my head;
not follow this blue path so dead
& never think of rising again—
then i'd be sad;
clouds would push their ways
from the edges of sea like mad
& cross the air on a sour day.
then rain
would fall & make me pain
in his wet chambers of steel
as the trees sing calm (&) still.
i know
nothing would ever happen
if sun would not throw
his beams on the bones of men.
if he did not rise
in the morning
he would make me only sad to despise
all of nature bathing in grey mourning
he would surprise no body but me

to day i can no longer think.

## white man

white man got no dreaming;
him go another way —
white man, him go different
him got road belong himself.

white man,
your diamond eyes shine mighty bad:
white man, you are lonely/
you are scared of this black
sky & these red stars—
white man, you ain't got no guts;
you got your boots & the pistol on the butts
you come this way 'cause
you want to be different—
white man, never step into
the virgin jungle
lest you wake up.
look, white man,
at my tall sky
watch my stars
twinkling, hanging from these high roofs
& go pray to your gods
to spare you the life of nature.
white man got no dreaming;
him go another way.

nature got a lot of guts—
pray to her
to fish you out of nature.
white man, you ain't got nothing;
look yonder, that's the jungle,
my green cradle.
look at the moon
sailing on this saffron bowl
mirroring my birth & death—
look down on the earth
& smell the soil
negro soil smelling black
white man,
let me paint nature
on your drab canvas—
your eyes are glassy
& you smell of death;
you close your eyes & you look drowsy—
come here & sleep on this furtive earth.

o thou holy snake!
relieve this white corpse
& give him black magic
to wake up & wander in my jungle,
all purple & blue.

white man, him go different
him got road belong himself.

## city out there

in this forest of noise
there is little silence left
to the pleasant rhythms of a heart.

there are too many white ice-boxes
in this town—
heart and brain, in frozen sanitary packages,
two coffee-breaks a lb.;
this is our christmas sale.
and many motor-cars
that take you (most certainly)
nowhere in notime:
these things make noise,
i tell you.
where,
the red-skin buddhas has sat for vision,
now;
25 mph., nomore, noless.
the familiar municipal cross is crystalized:
... and of course
all that rubber and motoroil
and all that sly steel
that will someday blast the milky-way.
steel and rubber and
kellog's sugar frosties for breakfast—
and amidst all this noise,
,odes of these steel nightingales,
only a heart cry creeps out of
the silent seraglio of paper!

## jazz at dusk

in the dark of the room
the bass is the bed
upon which the body of sound
scuttles, wriggles,
and the trumpet,
it wails fully, in a plenum
that is round, round
at once and stretches out
on a spiral line.
the drums
they beat at the very base of sound
and rattle the bones
of its slight skeleton.
and if the body of piano
and its every touch,
that is heavy on the extreme ribs.
sound sharp,
it is only
to run the thrill of a sudden dance
thru the evening-dark-of-the-room
that seems to do the strophe.

## americaland

that first day.
this land/
it looked all so very different—
the song of new words
that kicked in my ears/
trees no greener,
the steel harder, brighter.
rain soaked me thru & thru
at the gates
that knew
no whiteheel gods
no female deities)
flesh it was
& boiling blood
that i smelled
at the gates of this land:
paramour of my slumberless nights.
it could not have been more different
since noah's heart
lept with compassion.

OR THE VOIVCE

OPENING CHAPTER OF AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL

BY GABRIEL OKARA

Some of the townsmen said Okolo's eyes were not right, his head was not correct. !nis they said was the result of his knowing too much book, walking too much in the bush and others said it was due to his staying too long alone in the river.

So the town of Amatu talked and whispered; so the world talked and whispered. Okolo had no chest they said. His chest was not strong and that he had no shadow. Everything in this world that spoiled a man's name they said of him, all because he dared to search for IT. He was in search of IT with all his inside and with all his shadow.

Okolo his searching started when from school he came out and returned home to his people. When he returned home to his people, words of the coming thing, rumours of the coming thing, were in the air flying like birds. swimming like fishes in the river. But Okolo joined them not because what was there was no longer there and things had no more root. So he started his search for IT. And this the Elders stopped from slapping their thighs because of the coming thing. Why should Okolo look for IT? ... Why should he ask them if they had IT?... they wondered. Things had changed, the world had turned and they were now the elders be. No one in the past had asked for IT. Why should Okolo expect to find IT, now that they were the Elders be? No he mnst his searching cease. He must not spoil their pleasure.

So chief Izongo at the gathering of Elders spoke and the Elders in their insides turned these spoken words over and over and looked to see the road to take to pass over this inside-smelling thing ... They turned over the spoken words and messengers sent to Okolo to forthwith cease his search for IT.

So the messengers, three messengers set forth in their fearing-something road for Okolo's house. They walked little little, faster faster, and one of them knocked his foot against a stone.

1st messenger: Solemnly. "Its bad."
2nd messenger: "Is it good or bad?"
1st messenger: Solemnly. "Its bad."
2nd messenger: "Bad? My right foot is good to me."
3rd messenger: "Your nonsense words stop. These things have meaning no more. So stop talking words that create nothing."
1st. messenger: "To me there is meaning. My right foot always warneth me."
2nd messenger: "To me too there is meaning. If my left foot against something knocks as I walk, its a warning be."
3rd messenger: With contempt. "Nonsense."
1st messenger: Listen not to him. He this way always speaketh because he passed standard six. Because he standard six passed his ear refuseth nothing, his inside refuseth nothing like a dustbin."
3rd messenger: "Your spoken words I call nothing. What I say is things changeth, so change."
1st messenger: Spits on the ground. "Hear his creating words — things changeth. Ha, ha, ha,... change, change. He always of change speaketh, ha, ha, ha. What is the whiteman's word, the parable thou always talketh ... the old order changeth I forget the rest you always — "
3rd. messenger: Angrily. "Thy mouth shut. Thou nothing knows."
1st messenger: Also angrily. "Me knoweth nothing? Me knoweth nothing? I have no bile, I have no head, you think because I went not to school. Me knoweth nothing? Then answer thou me this. Your hair was black black be then it became white like a white cloth and now it is black black be more than blackness. The root what is it?.... Thou keepest quiet? Answer me. I know nothing thou sayeth."
2nd messenger: Throws his eyes back and front, left and right and speaks with lowered voice. "Speaketh this thing no more. The ears of Amatu are open. If this the ears of Izongo enters we will from our jobs fall. You know this give your selves. As for me, (shrugs his shoulders) if the world turns this way I take it; if it turns another way I take it. Any way the world turns I take it with my hands. I like sleep and my wife and my one son so I do not think."
3rd messenger: "You know not what you speak."
1st messenger: Raising his voice, "He is himself raising to the eye of the sky."
2nd messenger: Lowering his voice to the ground, "Talk not like this, hold yourself. I tell you, yourself hold before this thing a big thing turns."

These teaching words their ears entered and their inside entered. So every word they locked in their insides as they silently towards Okolo's house walked without their mouths opening.

It was the day's ending and Okolo by a window stood. Okolo stood looking at the sun behind the tree tops falling. The river was flowing, the finishing sun reflecting like a dying away memory. It was like an idol's face, no one know-

ing what is behind. Okolo at the palm trees looked. They were like women with hair hanging down dancing possessed. Egrets like white flower petals strung slackly across the river, swaying up and down, were returning home. And on the river canoes were crawling home with bent backs and tired hands paddling. A girl only a cloth around her waist tied, with half ripe mango breasts paddled driving her paddle into the river with sweet inside.

Okolo the window left and went to his table. A book he opened and read. The book he read, the book he read. A long time he took to read the book till night fell and closed the eye of the sky. To the window he went once more and at the night looked. The moon was on about-to-break moon. A vague circle of vague light surrounded it, telling a dance was going on up or down river. Across the moon's face and the dance circle menacing dark clouds idled past casting shadow after shadow on the river. Larger and darker clouds, some to frowning faces, grimacing faces changing were skulking past without the moon's ring suffocating the stars until then themselves lose in the threaten conformity of the dark cloud beyond.

Shuffling feet turned Okolo's head to the door. Three men he saw standing silent opening not their mouths.

"Who are you people be?" Okolo asked.

The people opened not their mouths.

"If you are coming-in people be then come in

The people opened not their mouths.

"Who are you?" Okolo again asked, walking to the men. As Okolo closer to the men walked, the men quickly turned and ran out.

The root of this Okolo knew not as the root of many many happening things in the town. So wonder held him and moved him to the door. Okolo a crowd saw, a crowd of men, women, children talking, whispering and three men talking and gesticulating in front. Wonder again moved Okolo out of his door and as he closer walked to the crowd, somebody moved by fear shouted, "He's coming, he's coming! Okolo's feet at the ground stuck. Women grabbed at their children and ran. The spittle from the mouth of one who's head is not correct enters one's mouth one's head also becomes not correct. So they ran and some men too who had no chest or shadow also ran. But the three men in front tumbled first and then stood resolutely, facing Okolo.

Okolo seeing the messengers, recognised them and questioned them. But the man in spite of their grim faces opened not their mouths. The remaining crowd hushed. The silence passed silence. The three messengers faced Okolo opening not their mouths. A man from the back of the crowd pushed his way to the messengers. The four of them put their heads together while with their eyes they looked at Okolo. They put their heads together for a while and walked towards Okolo, as if stalking an animal. And Okolo stood held by wonder. The four men moved nearer. Okolo stood looking. They moved nearer. Okolo stood. They moved nearer and suddenly pounced on Okolo. Okolo and the men to the ground fell. Hands at him grabbed, a thousand hands, the hands of the world. Okolo twisted, struggled and kicked with all his shadow, with all his life, and to his astonishment he saw himself standing free. He ran. Running feet followed. He ran. A million pursuing feet thundered after him. He ran past his house without knowing and ran into another. A woman giving suck

to her baby screamed. Out Okolo sprang and ran. The running feet came nearer the carning-nothing feet of the world. Okolo a corner turned and nearly ran into a boy and a girl standing with hands holding each other. They did not look at him. Okolo ran. The pursuers were reaching him. He turned a corner. A dog barked at him. Okolo ran. He was now at the ending of the town. Only one but was left and beyond it the mystery of the forest. Okolo ran and and as he ran past, a voice held him. "Come in", it said, "come in quickly." In Okolo went, by instinct guided and in the gloom stood planting. Outside the dog barked, the pursuing feet of the world stopped and the shout of triumph from the ground reached the eye of the sky and all the town shook. As the shout shook the town like a canon blast, fear entered Okolo and he thought of escape through the hole, the sole window at the back. But a hand reached him from the dark void. "Stay quiet" the darkness whispered, "nothing they will do to you." Next Okolo saw the mat covering the door move aside. Faces, a mass of faces glistening with sweat in the moonlight stood, talking arguing grim faces like the dark mysterious forest afire with flies. Then a shadow blocked his view then silence. And a voice clear and cool like a glass of water, from the standing shadow sallied forth.

"What is it? What again do you want of me?

What do you want of a witch?"

"We want nothing of you" a voice came from the crowd. "We want nothing of you. We want only the man you keepeth in your house."

"I keep no one. Why should I any of you keep who called me a witch and has kept me away from the town? Why should I any of you keep? Leave me alone. Go your ways," the standing shadow strongly spoke.

As the standing shadow spoke thus, from the crowd came a stronger voice

"We go our ways? You cannot speak thus to us. Know that you are a witch be. You cannot thus speak to us in the old times. Even now —"

"Come and take me and hang me as in the old times they used to do. Come and take me," went forth the challenge from the standing shadow.

"Give us our man", shouted a voice.

"Which man you want of me?" asked Tuere with a strong inside.

"Give us Okolo."

"Okolo? Why should I keep him? Is he not one of you?"

"Argue not with her" said a voice. "Let's the house enter and bring him out."

"I say I keep no one. If you say the man you want is in my house, come in and take him." said Tuere with a steady inside.

"You say the forest he entered," asked a voice.

"I said not so. Accuse me not of what I said not," she said.

"You heard not his foot steps?" asked a voice.

"I am used to only bad foot steps. So I only heard bad foot steps."

"You say bad foot steps you heard?"

"Yes. Bad foot steps coming out of *their* insides."

"I say argue not with her. How Okolo her house entered I saw with this my two eyes. I was in the front be. Let's go in and drag him out," said a voice from the crowd impatiently.

When this last man spoke thus, Tuere forward walked. And as Tuere forward walked the men in the crowd's front moved back.

"Stand", a voice from the crowd's back urged. "Stand, she can nothing to us do. We are all church-entered people be. We are all know-God people. She can nothing to us do."

"Is it you who speak thus?", said Tuere. "Is it you, Seitu? It was you who first called me a witch and then others followed you to call me a witch. Now you say nothing I can do to you. When did your belief in the powers of witchcraft finish in your inside? You say you are a know-God man be. Come and my house enter."

"You can nothing do", said Seitu from the crowd's back

"I say argue not with her", said the one who said this before. "Our time is finishing."

"I see. You know time finishes. Yet when my fathers's time finished and he went away you people put it on my head. And when the time of my mother finished and she went away, you said I killed her with witchcraft. whose time finishes not? Our time is finishing as the time of some of your relations, your fathers and mothers finished and they went to the land of the dead. You did not with witchcraft kill them. But this I who with witchcraft killed my father and my mother. Yes you say I am a witch, so I am a witch be," the standing shadow with all her inside spoke and their reaction watched as a schoolmistress would the reaction of her pupils after delivering a few homilies as the crowd backwards and forwards moved, not knowing what to do.

In the hut Okolo stood, hearing all the spoken words outside and speaking with his inside. He spoke with his inside hard to know why this woman Tuere behaved thus. He knew her story only too well. She had been a girl of unusual habits, keeping to herself and speaking to herself. She did not with boys flirt though her beauty even one's hunger killed if one saw her. So it was in the insides of every one that perhaps she had not the parts of a woman. They did not because of these her strange behaviours call her a witch. They openly called her a witch when her mother and father died one after the other within a few weeks and after every young man who proposed to her died one after the other. All these Okolo remembered He also remembered how in a circle of strong eyes and strong faces she stood being accused of taking witchcraft to kill her father and mother. They then from the town drove her. His inside then smelled for the town's people and for himself for not being fit to do any thing on her behalf. But this feeling in his inside had slowly, slowly died with each dying year under the mysterious might of tradition. And now wonder held him for her protecting him. He was a part of the society that had disgraced and rejected her. But now she was protecting him from the very society.

So it was with wroing-doing-filling inside that he to the door moved and peered out. He did not this deserve of her. Shame, like rain, fell on him and his bones touched. But as he peered out the crowd was backwards and forwards moving, talking and arguing.

"Come forward if you can come", Tuere challenged.

"You can to us do nothing," said Seitu still at the back of the crowd making himself the voice of the crowd.

Okolo wanted to go out but he had two voices in his inside. One said 'go' and the other said 'stay', and before he could decide which to obey Tuere threw another challenge at the crowd.

"You refuse to come, you who is only strong in a crowd."

"We are a know-God people. You can nothing do. Just bring our man", replied Seitu from the crowd's back.

Tuere standing straight and walking towards the crowd, said; "Then I to you come." As she said thus and moved slowly towards the crowd, the crowd moved back and the people turned their backs including Seitu the voice of the people, and ran. They ran with the backs of their feet touching the back of their heads. Wo would want to die of witches? No one. So they ran with all their insides and all with all their shadows. Tuere stood watching the bad foot steps dying away and smiled the first smile that came out of her mouth since she was stuck with the name of witch.

Okolo wanted to go out but at that one moment Tuere turned and walked towards the hut. He wanted to get out but his inside told him that would be the lowest ingratitude that would even pass under a snake. His inside did not agree with him. So he moved backed into the gloom of the hut and waited.

Presently Tuere silently stepped in and put the mat over the door. And the hut became dark with darkness exceeding darkness. Though they were only a few paces apart Okolo could not see her. They stood thus silent without each other seeing, listening to their insides, listening to the darkness. Then suddenly walking feet Okolo heard. Feet walking towards the dying embers at the hearth. Then he saw the embers move and glowed like a new-appearing sun or a going-sun. Then splinters of firewood he saw and heard drop on the embers. And then he heard her trying to blow the embers to living flames. She blew, blew, and blew, but the embers only glowed, not responding like a god more sacrifice asking. They only glowed showing a face intent in application. She continued to blow her breath coming in soft gusts then a token flame shot up momentarily and died.

Okolo stood watching and speaking to his inside. How many years had she killed tending the dying embers of her fire with her breath and shadow and wishes and remembrances? As Okolo stood thus speaking with his inside, a voice entered his inside asking him to bring some firewood from the corner of the hut. With a start he moved towards the corner with hands extended in front. Soon his hands the wall touched. Then the hands he lowered slowly until the splinters of firewood he touched propped against the wall. He took them and moved back. As he moved back unseen hands took the firewood from his hands and crossed them on the embers, Then there were more blowings and a twin flame shot up. The twin flame going into one another and becoming one grew long and short, spread, twisted and danced, the essence of the firewood eating up like passion. And the face of Tuere was satisfaction, for her breath

and shadow into the flame had gone. She remained kneeling before the dancing flame with face intent looking at the flame, looking at what is behind the flame, the root of the flame. She kneeling remained, then slowly rose to her feet turned and faced Okolo. And before Okolo could his mouth open to thank her she spoke.

"How do you expect to find IT? How do you expect to find IT when every body has his inside locked up?"

Okolo did as if to speak.

"How do I know this, you want to ask me? I know. I hear every happening thing in the town even though I am locked up here in this hut. How or where do you think you will find IT when everybody surface-water-things tell, when things have no more root? How do you expect to find IT when fear has locked up the insides of the low and the insides of the high are filled up with nothing but yam?..... Stop looking for IT. Stop suffering yourself."

"I cannot stop", Okolo with whisper whisper spoke. "I cannot this thing stop. I must find IT. It is there. I am the voice from the locked up insides and the Elders, wanting not the people to hear, want to stop me. Their insides are smelling hard at me but —"

"Ssh!" Tuere hushed Okolo, her ears cocking. "I coming footsteps hear." Okolo listened and he also heard the coming footsteps, the knowing-nothing footsteps, coming:

# Seven Poems

BY O. R. DATHORNE

## HARMATTAN

Round the corner from the house
All day it is the Harmattan
And the trees —

At the back of the garden it slaps the matting
And tickles the door
That sounds out its empty laughter,
And the clouds —

And the trees
Cough at the clouds
To bring rain.

## ON THE ROAD

The red pencilled sand-road
Heavily overscores the
    monotony of mistakes the
    paper trees repeat.

Time and again before me
The road has opened up like this:
Brown sand, green trees,
Green sand, brown trees,
Trees sand brown green. . . .

## GENESIS

In the beginning
I began,
With the rain scratching the zinc roof,
Showering the tar roads with wet sweet water.

I came with the commencement,
Part of the smell of dusty summer roots,
Parcel of autumn's heaps
And a million blades of sharp grass
Waiting their doom at the hands
Of the heavy foot of the first man.

With sun and thunder,
Moon and river-water,
I was born in the twitching limbs
Of a wretched woman and a hungry man.

I was his lips seeking hers
In the darkness of no-world.
His hands clawing her side-bones
In the ecstasy of not-yet.
Her surrender of her quick, jumping body
To the hungry hunger,
Rhythm,
Of that man's breath.

## SHERRY PARTY IN NIGERIA

In neat rows we stand
Like groundnuts,
Each one in his shell,
Murmuring of this, on which we spend some time,
And that, on which we spend the rest,
Steering the conversation carefully between the tables.

Voices rise and fall,
Governments are set up,
Revolutions break out with our breaths.
We settle all with polite solutions,
While our shadows dally,
While our voices hum the hum-drum.

## LETTER FROM LAGOS

In your mourning for sun
On your dull winter morning,
I wish you life and light
And joy, when your red winter sun
Cuts itself out of the dull cardboard sky.

Here on a clear independent morning,
The white sun kow-tows to the blue wave at Bar-beach.
And children curve thirsty feet
Like shingle
To the archetypal mould of incoming sea.

On the wharf the greedy fingers of cranes
Dig deep into the hole of a ship's hold.

For the federal sun
To imprisoned here,
Can only telegraph his greetings
Over the paper sky.

## WIND OF CHANCE

The mother of morning opens doors
And the young technical sun comes out.

Preaching the new talk of Science,
That shall save all from the blasphemy of culture.

At noon the sun is middle-aged and wiser,
Forgives the haste of morning.

Hopes for a dull, quiet evening.
The African sunset opens its legs
Like slum prostitutes,
And the lecherous old European moon
Follows it behind the sunset.

# IBRAHIM SALAHI

BY ULLI BEIER

Great artists turn up in unexpected places. When going in search for new African artists I was cetainly not expecting to find one in Khartoum. The Soudan has no artistic tradition, except Arabic calligraphy and until recently Islam would have frowned on any artistic activity that created images. And even though some aspects of the life of the city have been modernised radically and there is a very brisk intellectual life going on there is not much interest in the visual arts. The city has neither an art gallery nor another suitable place for the exhibition of contemporary art. Neither public buildings nor private houses have been adorned with works of art. The art school that is attached to the Khartoum Technical Institute is thus functioning in a kind of vacuum. And yet it was here that I discovered one of the most mature artists of Africa: Ibrahim Salahi.

Ibrahim Salahi got his early training in Khartoum and later went to study at the State School of Fine Art. When he returned home his work was as dull as that of the average art school student. Conventional, academic portraits and landscapes he was painting then; competent they were, but not very original and there was certainly nothing African about them. The artist, however, was deeply dissatisfied. He knew that he had acquired valuable techniques abroad, but he was also conscious that he had absorbed foreign conventions that must ultimately remain meaningless to him. To liberate himself from this foreign influence be began to study and to develop whatever local traditions he could find. He practised and developed Islamic calligraphy on very individual lines. He created elaborate abstract designs based on the geometrical patterns which Sudanese peasants use in basket weaving. He studied the colour schemes of the dyed raffia they used. Gradually he developed these Islamic patterns and writings into swinging rhythms. In these abstract fantasies the artist "played himself free." Soon the ornamental "doodles" that pollulated in his calligraphic paintings (Pl II) began to take figurative shapes, and soon the figurations became images and became the central theme of the artist's work and the remnants of ornamental patterns were dissolved into rhythm. Before he knew where he was the artist had found himself.

When I met Ibrahim Salahi during the first months of the year 1961 he had realised that he was now getting somewhere. That he had penetrated beneath the surface of things. He seemed caught in a fever of creation, constantly forming people, images, symbols — quite regardless of the fact in Khartoum there were very few who wanted to look at his work.

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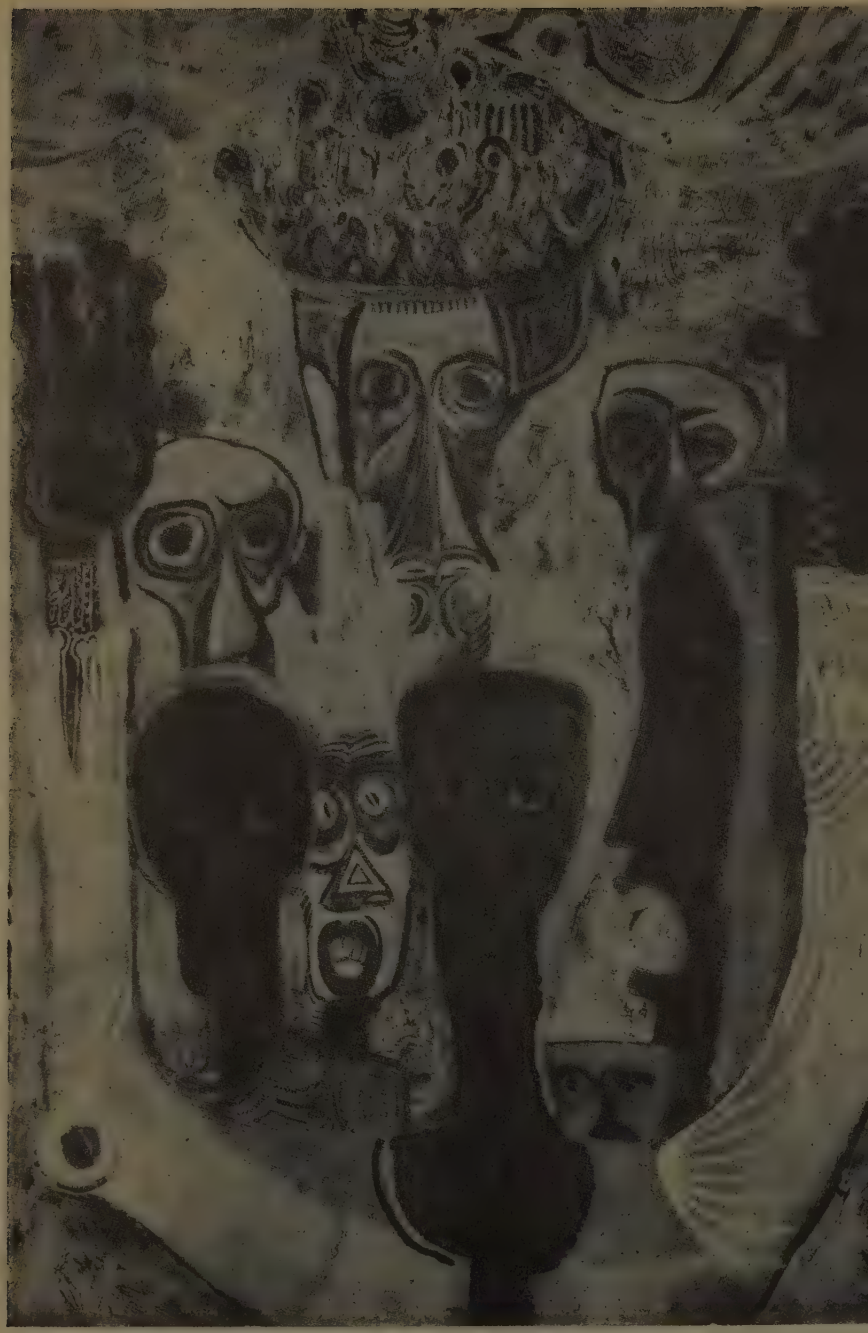

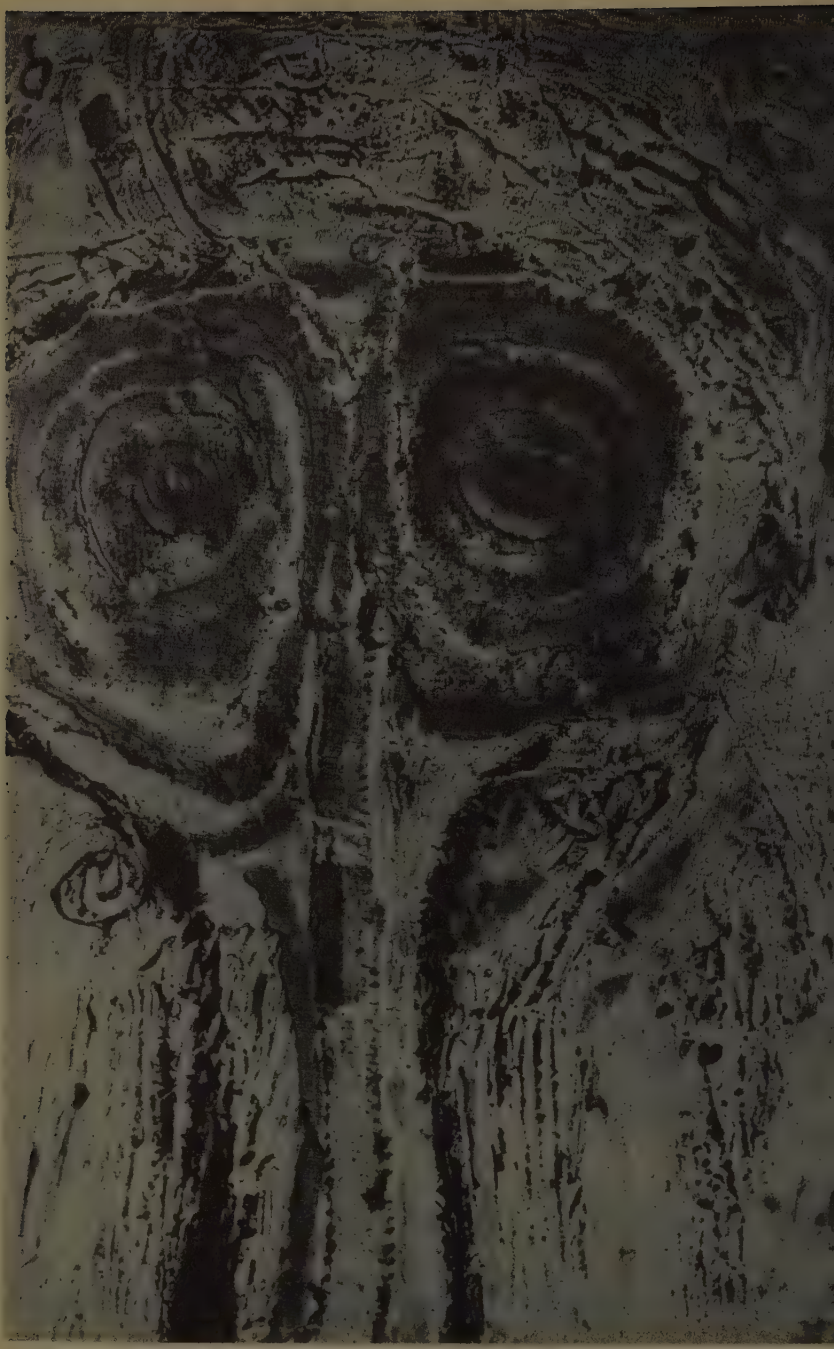

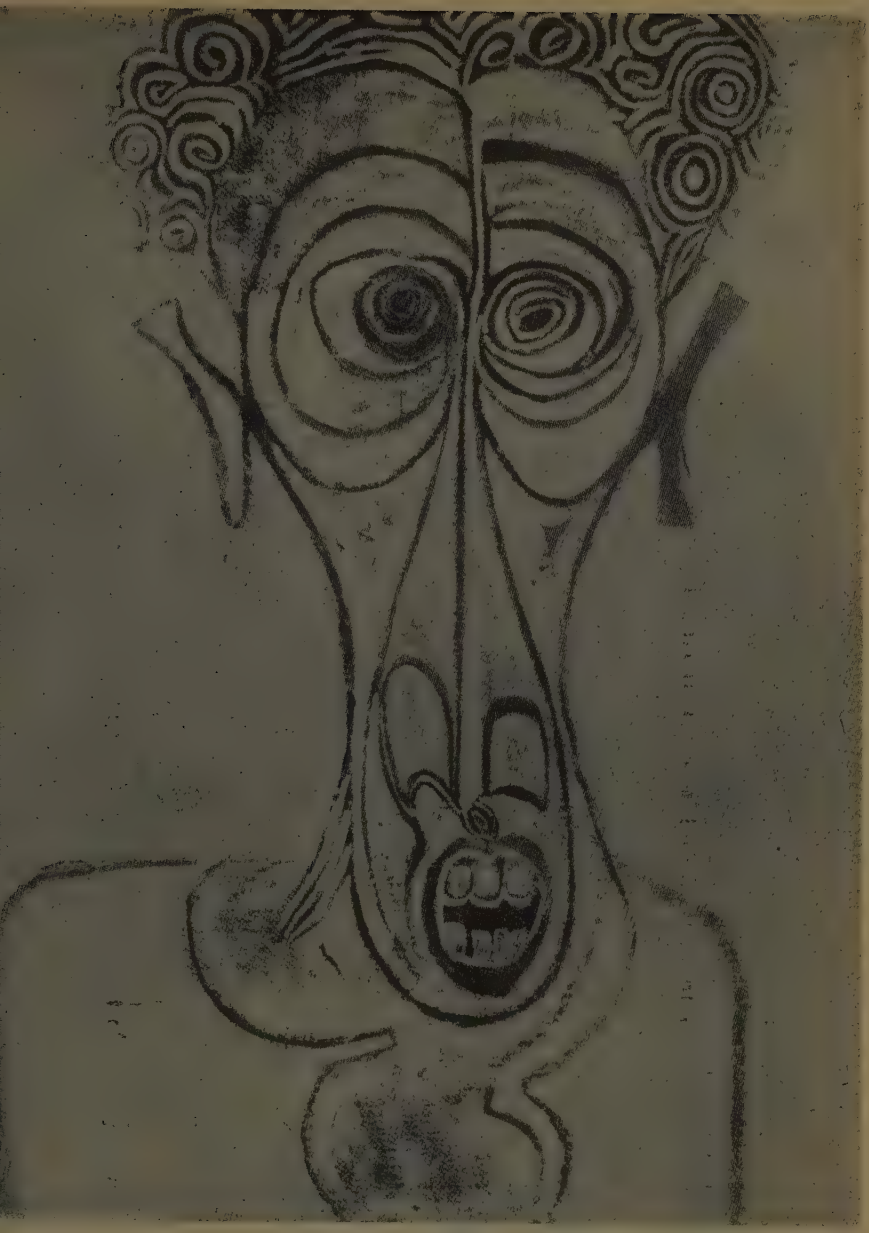

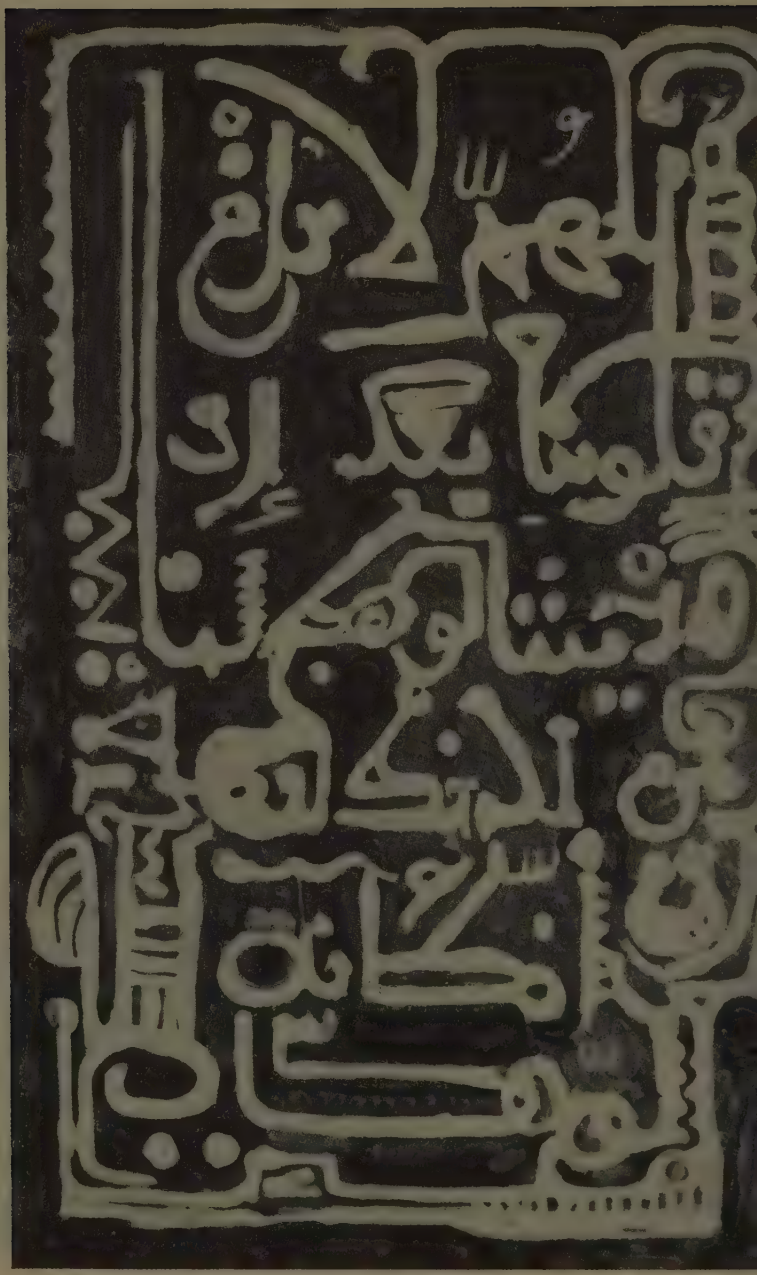

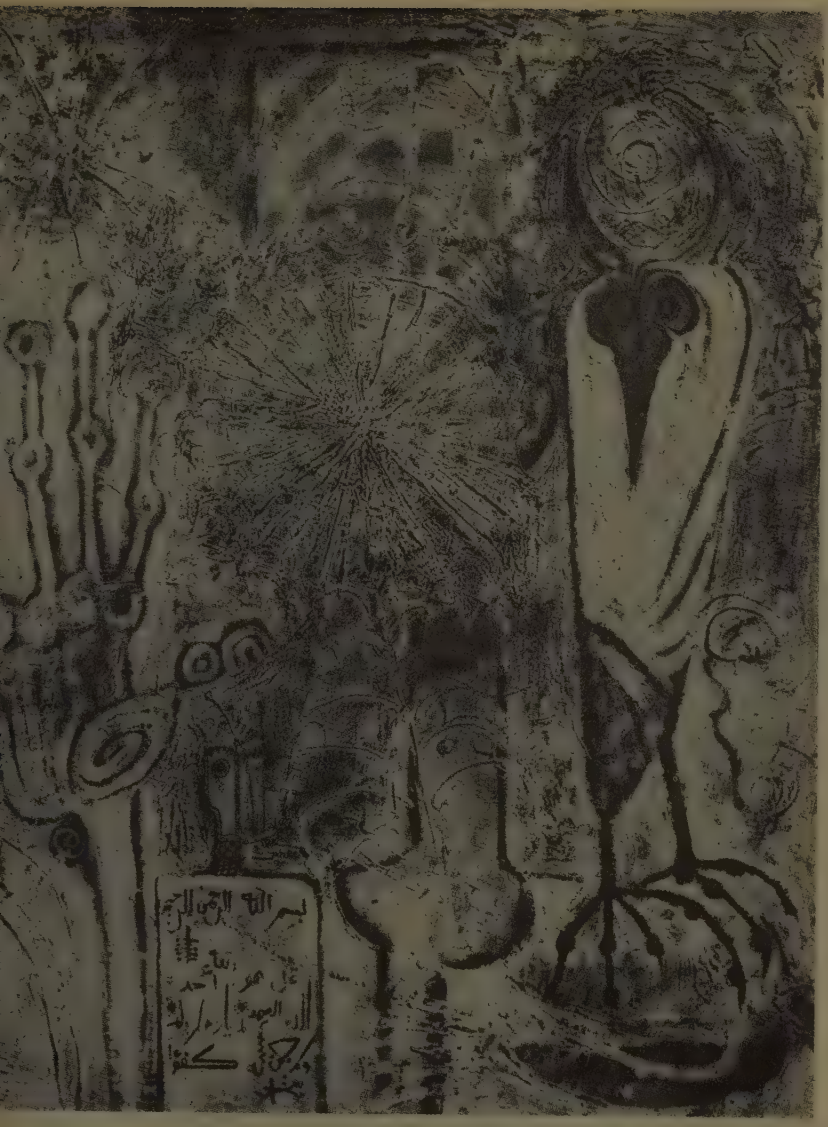

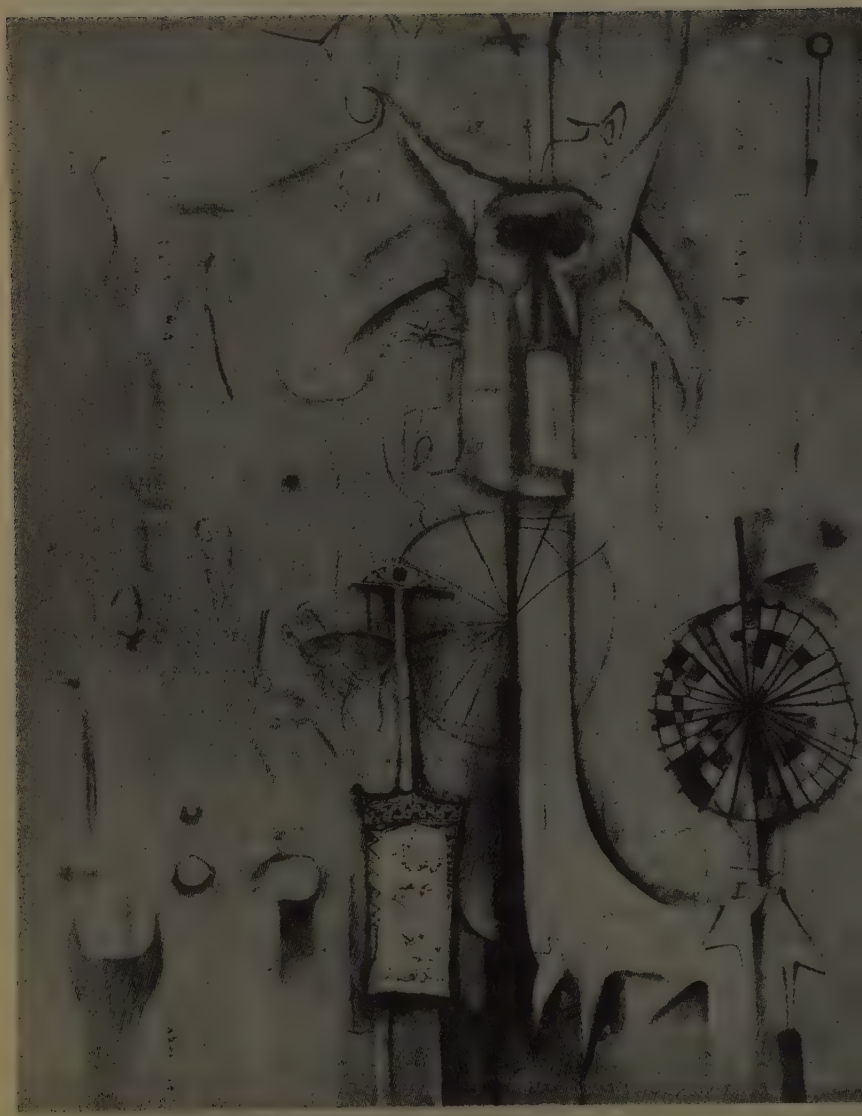

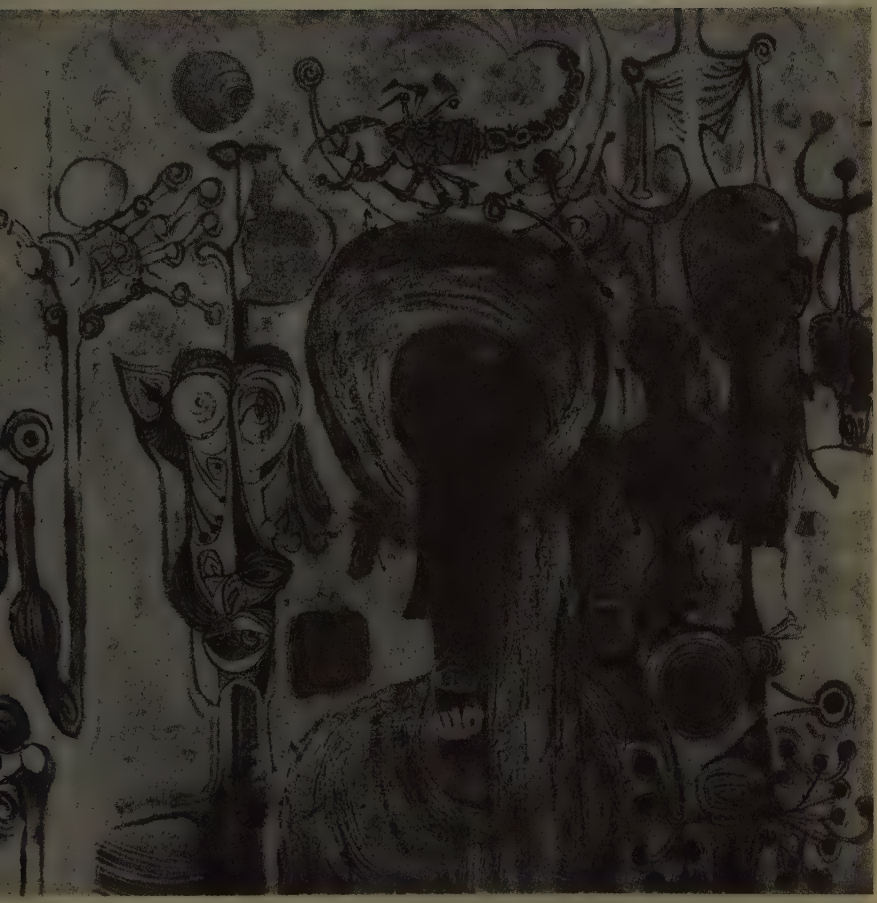

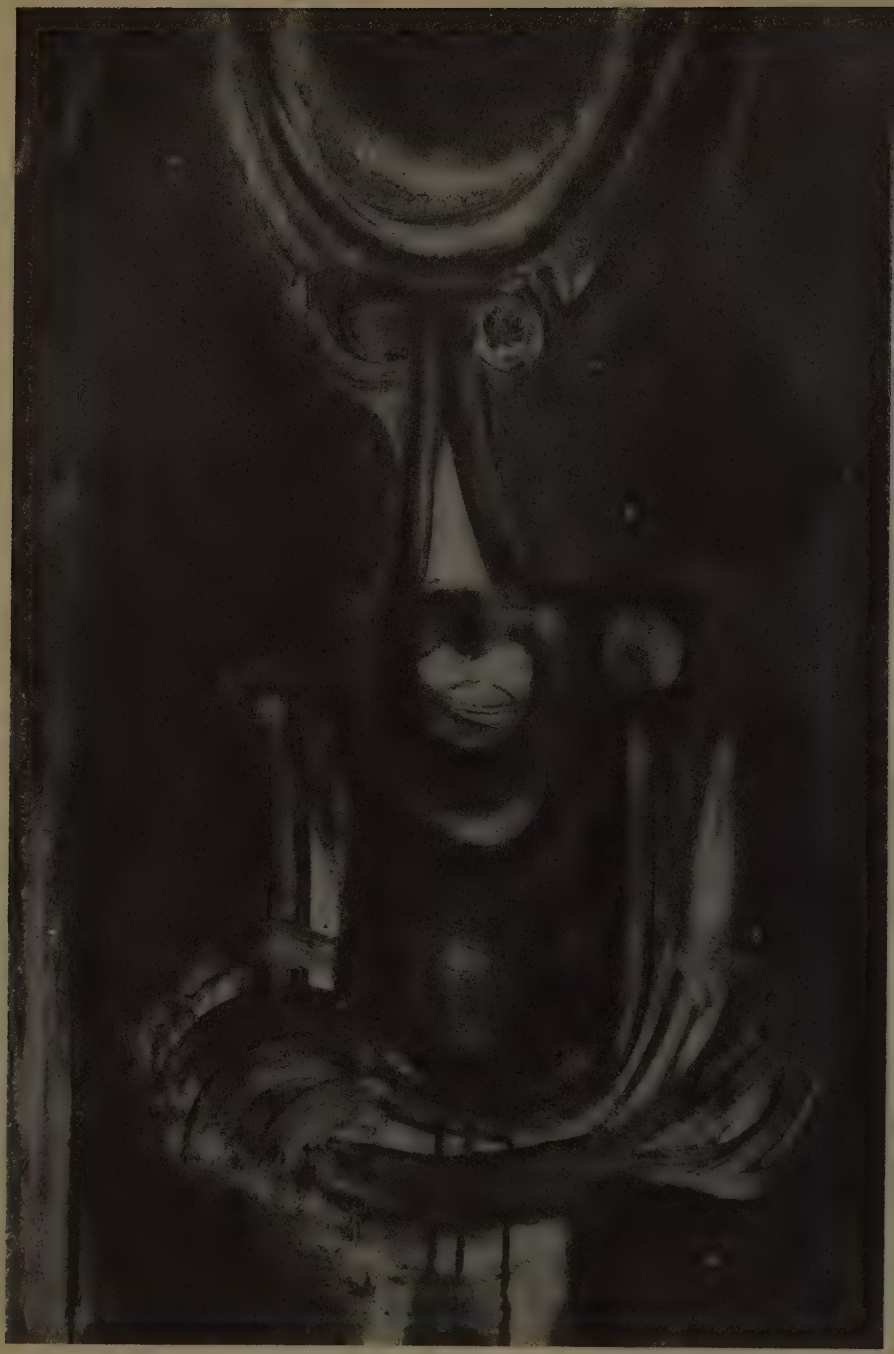

By the time this article appears in Black Orpheus, the work selected for reproduction here, will probably be typical only for the first important phase in the artist's development.

It is both surprising and exciting that his work is so intensely African. I am not sure whether I can define the African qualities of this work, There are of course obvious formal affinities with certain African masks, for example Senufo funeral masks, but on the other hand one might equally see (if one wants to) formal resemblances with modern European painting and yet this work is so highly original in its overall expression and composition that such resemblances are purely superficial and of little real consequence.

Perhaps it is the mythological quality of his work. His figures seem to be a mixtures of gods, human beings, animals and plants. In his work there is no dividing line between the living and the dead. There is a sense of the unity of creation. Much of his work represents human suffering, but the suffering and the emotion is always sublimated to a symbolical plane. It always gains universal significance. Looking at Salahi's work one would guess that a rich African artistic tradition had here found a modern interpretation and transformation. Yet the tradition one feels so strongly in this work is in fact absent in the Sudan and the artist has had to descend into his own soul to produce this rich and profuse imagery.

I could not dare to comment on the individual works reproduced here, because they are so strong and complete in themselves that I feel my own interpretation to be hopelessly inadequate. I have asked the artist to comment himself on his pictures. He complied only reluctantly, explaining that he works without plan or preconceived subject matters. His comments must be considered afterthoughts; but I find them so beautiful and poetic that they are worth reading in themselves:

Ibrahim Salahi is a deeply moving poet with his brush. But reading his comments that follow, I began to wonder whether he will not one day start to write?

I. A man lost in his introspective visions,
Looking in and into himself,
Sitting in the shade of a cracked mud wall.
Gazing as the shadows creep over his toes,
Staring into the blaze of the sun,
Gazing into nothingness.
Until his two eyes become one,
Gazing into the empty horizion of far away dreams,
Into a mirror that I hold before my hands,
To paint a portrait for me.

II. "Pray do not change our hearts having shown us the way to light, and have mercy on us, giver of all"
A most restful verse from the Koran.

III. Secrets of life and death.

IV. In my dreams I used to see a donkey standing in the sun. Standing still and thinking. A donkey with a long drooping face and sad vague eyes. The donkey's face becomes mine. My face becomes long and I stand in the sun thinking in place of that donkey.

Memories come back. Things I know and remember before I was born. It takes me back to myself.

V. This is my voice in the night. A torturing experience of suffering with those who suffer. A long continuous cry.
A spirit wailing for those who suffer.

VI. Men of evil come to make a man that was free-breezing in the sacred earth of his own country - a slave in his own land.
It made me sick to hear about things in South Africa. Identity cards like renegades. Rounded with barbed wire in camps. They had to rise or die. They rose like a whirling sand storm against the hot sky of the desert to burn up the shame of the past and the sad painful memories that are still present through tyranny.

VII. a) Fatima is sad. Her father died. She does not cry out, but she cries.
b) A man blows on his *zumbara* telling legends of ancient glories of the tribe. Its deep voice tells tales of knights who rode to defend their land.

VIII. Empty eyes of the unmarried girls always looking into empty space. Waiting. These eyes haunt me. I wish they could marry and smile.

IX. One Ramadan a scorpion stung my little nephew. We just stood there. One can do nothing. Doctors were useless Two hours and he died. His mother did not cry. I wished she could have wept and piled earth over her head She saw her child die. Before her eyes. Foams of blood bubbled out of his lips. Black poison. He died. We took him home cold and silent. We buried him. He came back. I saw him three days later at dawn. He spoke to me. I shivered, but I was happy. He is alive. But where.

X. The man and his woman.

# Luo Songs

BY HENRY OWUOR

The Luo are a tall Nilotic tribe inhabiting the eastern shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza in Kenya. They have not been in their present area for more than two centuries, but they have brought with them a culture and language very close to that of other Nilotic people still living further north, in Northern Uganda and in the Sudan. They are ceremonious people and very fond of music. The eight songs printed here are all *oigo* songs and represent only one of the many musical traditions in Luo country.

The *oigo* are love songs which were sung by girls of marriageable age when they went to visit the young men with whom they were courting. This was often called "visiting the simba". The simba was the hut in which young men slept and entertained their guests. The visit was usually carefully organized at or near the full moon. As the girls walked to their destination, they sang the oigos either individually or as a group, maintaining the performance all the way by singing in turns. There was no formal order of singing; the more musically gifted girls or the more effusive took the leading part according to their mood.

Meanwhile the young men were waiting and listening intently until the the first faint oigo melody reached their ears. Then one of them stood on a raised piece of ground just outside the gate of the homestead and announced at the top of his voice: "Ogoree, omolo" (the landing has taken place, they have arrived).

At the gate the girls stopped moving but continued singing the oigos until a grandmother of the compound, who had placed herself nearby, offered them gifts — metal ornaments, beads or rings. As part of the evening's entertainment the young men smoked a gourd-pipe of opium or played enthusiastically on a reed flute while the girls sang the oigos. Often the hosts would have invited a lyre player as well.

The oigos were also sung while girls collected firewood or were going to draw water, but this was regarded as a kind of rehearsal. Girls who were close friends were often known by their favourite oigos. Late in the evening, while travelling to a gathering at a lyre performance, they would decide to follow different paths (the longer and more tortuous the better) shouting the oigos at each other. The girls also used the oigos to introduce themselves to the lyre player before addressing him. This beautiful custom has unfortunately died out completely over the past thirty years, and all the songs translated here were recorded by elderly women who remembered them from their youth.

The style of oigo singing is extremely distinctive. The singer trills in a bird-like voice and conveys an impression of being possessed by the stream of song within her, breathless and helpless. The emotions expressed are often sorrowful and almost hysterical, yet the singer exults in her ability to sing endlessly like a bird (as in *Atimo Hono).* Her accomplishment will be judged by her skill and power in this *redo* style; refrains such as "doree ree yo" being much more repetitive than can be conveyed in these translations. In *Pod Aredo* and *Atimo Hono* the singer conveys very well the possessive nature of the oigo. *Simber Mwalo* refers to the custom of starting the oigo on a distant path, so as to have the longest possible journey to the simba; hence the singer begins her lament "down in the reeds". *Nyagwenda Ywagere Tok Dala* again stresses the sorrow of the oigo singer, but *Okot Kiyiengi and Nyagwe Gune* stress another side of her nature, wilful, impulsive and unpredictable, liable to break the taboos of ordinary life. The bell referred to in *Okot Kiyiengi* is probably a ceremonial bell hanging on the reed walls of a grain store, which the young would be forbidden to touch. *Nyagwe Gune* also gives us a moving glimpse of a Luo family starting off on a visit, led by their favourite bull, who symbolizes and embodies the whole family or clan. The singer has been running ahead to keep up with the bull, and this accounts for the pain in her chest.

*Yala ere Yala* is a modern song in the oigo style, in which the singer mocks at the new-fangled fashions introduced by the shops. Yala is a small trading centre in Luo country, and this song probably dates from the time when the first overseas goods were being offered for sale there. Her satire plays over the young clerks, the bicycle-owners and the new printed cloths. *Aloo Ogo Oigo* is really a lyre player's song, which would be sung in the simba while the girls were visiting. The lyre-player's "sim" is his musical assistant who has stayed at home, and he compliments the oigo singer by saying that she is as good as an assistant to him, while all the men are simply lolling in their chairs half-dead and doing nothing.

The word oigo seems to mean slightly different things in different localities, and so a true evaluation of the songs would have to take these into account. I have not been able to do this. Nevertheless, the following conclusions can be based on the songs printed here.

The girl in the oigo songs is a type representing only certain characteristics of girlhood, as expressed within the special culture of her tribe. She lives in a dreamland, though much tempered by the idealised role she longs to fill in the community. By implication, singing is regarded as a good thing, especially when it is powerful — so that everybody can hear it — and persistent. As with a bird, singing appears to be the natural outpouring of the life force itself. The prestige of clan and family depended not only on the prowess of its young men but also on the zealous way in which its women represented its interests in song and dance. For a group of girls the oigo was a means of announcing their presence and of differentiating themselves from the older married women; for an individual a way of expressing her idiosyncrasies. Educationally, the oigos were an amusing way of criticising flagrant breaches of conduct. The oigos are, however, more reflective and less excited than the insistent re-theme would suggest; they are simple, rather repetitive but nevertheless delightful tunes.

ATIMO HONO

I am possessed,
A bird bursting on high with the *ree* lament
I am the untiring singer.
Dear bird, let's sing in rivalry
Our *doree ree yo . . . . ;*
It is my wayward self,
Singing in rivalry
*The doree ree yo;*
I am the untiring singer
That rock far-off Mombasa
With the *aree ree yo;*
It is the voice crying the *doree*

That rocks far-off Nakuru;
I am the compelling *Ondoro* drum,
The bird bursting with the *doree's* plaintive tones;
I am the untiring singer
Choking herself with the *doree ree yo.*

POD AREDO

I'm still complaining,
Crying the *ree ree ree,*
I'm still complaining,
Ever tearful with the *ree ree ree,*
I'm still complaining;
The redo-singer's unceasing complaint,
Scion of young women
Still complaining,
Ever tearful with the *ree ree ree,*
I'm still complaining.

I am in love with the oigo,
I cry the *ree ree ree*
Infatuated with the oigo;
The redo-singer's unceasing complaint
Blasting Amimo's hearth
With constant complaining;
Ever tearful with the *ree ree ree,*
I'm still complaining.

## THE NYAGWE GUNE

Our bull is starting off for Holo,
The Kapiyo clan have fine cattle.
Our bull is starting off for Holo,
The Kapiyo clan have fine cattle.

Then the giggling one said,
Then the playful one said,
(How amusing)
The impulsive *ree* singer
Is a forest creature lamenting the pain in her chest;
The forest creature lamenting the pain in her chest,
The spirited one lamenting the pain in her chest,
The giggling *ree* singer
Is a forest creature lamenting the pain in her chest,
The *Nyagwe Gune* lamenting the pain in her chest,
The impulsive *ree* singer
Is a forest creature lamenting the pain in her chest.

Our bull is starting off for Holo,
The Kapiyo have fine cattle;
The Kadulo clan is a bull which starts off for Holo,
The Kapiyo have fine cattle.

## OKOT KIYIENGI

The *ree* for Ameli, daughter of Omolo,
She is the Achichi who goads the encircling crowd;
Sing *oyiyoree.*
Sing *oyiyoree.*
She is Achichi who goads the encircling crowd:

Shaking the bell.
Shaking the bell
I dare you to shake the bell
The forbidden bell,
Who dares shake the bell?
The girl who shakes the bell
It's the naughty one who longs to tickle the bell;
Tickling the bell.
I dare you to tickle the bell
The forbidden bell,
Who dares shake the bell
The girl who shakes the bell
It's the naughty one who longs to shake the bell:

The *ree* for Ameli, daughter of Omolo,
She is the Achichi who goads the encircling crowd;
Sing *oyiyoree*
Sing *oyiyoree.*
She is the Achupa who goads the encircling crowd.

## SIMBA NWALO

Sing the *ree,*
I am starting my lament down in the reeds
Down in the reed country
I am starting,
I, the *nyaredo rere reyo;*

Sing the *ree,*
I am starting the lament down in the simba,
Down in the simba
I am starting,
I, the *nyaredo rere reyo;*

Sing the *ree,*
I am starting my lament down in the reeds,
Down in the reeds
I have gone into the reeds.
I, the *nyaredo rere reyo;*

Sing the *ree,*
I am starting my lament down in the simba,
Down in the simba
I am starting.
I, the *nyaredo rere reyo.*

## NYAGWENDA YWAGORF TOK DALA

My chick laments its life in the tree behind our home,
Crying *Chiyo;*
The kite has carried away my chick,
The little "cock" lamented its life.

So would I shout in distress,
Would flap my hands mournfully.
Flapping in imitation.

My chick laments its life in the tree behind our home,
Crying *Chiyo;*
The kite has carried away my chick,
The little "cock" lamented its life.

So would I howl inconsolably,
Yes, stumble with sorrow,
Stumbling in invitation.

My chick laments its life in the tree behind our home,
Crying *Chiyo;*
The kite has carried away my chick,
The little "cock" lamented its life.

## YALA ERE YALA

Yala, O sing the *ree* for Yala,
Sing the *eree ree yo*,
These coming days the clerks will be writing,
The skirt of Adore, the daughter of Disa,
Is printed with boards on one side,
Plain cloth on the other;
Amara's mother cannot afford a biba
She travels on foot,
But the Kamnara gambol on wheels;
Even Oloo the musician of Nyabondo village
Has forsworn travelling by train;
How can a mere musician fly in an aeroplane?

So Yala, I sing the *ree* for Yala,
Sing the *eree ree yo*,
These coming days the clerks will be writing.

## ALOO OGO OIGO

The *ree ree*
Aloo has sung the *oigo*,
The *ree*, O Odera,
Aloo has sung the *oigo*.

The *yoo ree*
My sim is staying home,
Odera's sim
Staying home to reflect in tunes.

The *yoo ree*
This is Gol, son of Were,
The yoo, O Odera
Who is Gol, son of Were.

In his chair
Almost smothered by the chairs,
Nyagudi of the Kakalo clan
In his chair
Almost smothered by the chairs.

In their chairs,
Almost smothered by their chairs,
Our neighbours the Kogalo clan
In their chairs
Almost smothered by their chairs.

So the *ree ree*
Aloo has sung the *oigo*,
She is Obiero's daughter
Aloo has sung the *oigo*.

These songs were translated by Henry Owuor and Gerald Moore.

# THE WHOLE TRUTH

BY FRANK LONDON BROWN

The bass was walking! Nothing but the bass. And the rhythm section waited — counting time with the tap of a foot or the tip of a finger against the piano top. "Pro" had just finished his solo and the blood in his neck was pumping so hard it made his head hurt. Sweat shone upon the brown backs of his fingers. And the moisture stained the bright brass of his tenor where he held it.

Jack, a young eyeglass-wearing boy from Dallas had stopped playing the drums, and he too was sweating Stains were beginning to appear upon his thin cotton coat. His dark skin caught the purple haze from the overhead spot light and the sweat that gathered on his flat cheekbones seemed purple. Percy R. Brookins leaned over the piano tapping a black key, but not hard enough to make a sound.

Everybody seemed to be waiting.

And the bass was walking!

Doom-do-doom-doom-doom-doom-doom-doom-doom!

A tall, thin, white man holding a tenor loosely at his side stood next to lanky, ginger-brown "Pro" also known as "The Man".

"Pro" had wailed.... had blown choruses that dripped with the smell of cornbread and cabbage... had roared like a late "L".... and had cried like a blues singer on the last night of a good gig. "Pro" had been "Pro" and nobody was better than "Pro" when "Pro" was "Pro".

Now it was the white tenorman's turn — right after the bass solo was over And he waited, and "Pro" waited, and so did Jake the drummer and Percy R Brookins. Little Jug the bassman was going into his eighth chorus and he showed no sign of letting up.

DOOM-DE-DOOM-DOOM-DOOM-DOOM-DOOM-DOOM-DOOM!

Jake looked out into the shadowy faces of the audience. They were hard to see behind the bright-colored lights that ringed the bandstand. Yet he felt that they, too, waited....

"Pro" had laid down some righteous sounds... he had told so much truth ....told it so plainly....so passionately, that he had scared everybody in the place....even himself. And now he waited for the affirming bass to finish so that he could hear what the white man had to say.

And the bass walked!

Jake leaned over his drums and whispered to Percy R. Brookins.

"McDougal sure looks beat, don't he?"

Percy R. Brookins nodded and then put his hand to the side of his mouth and whispered back,

"His old lay's pregnant again."

"Again? What's that, Number Three?"

"Number Four." Percy R. Brookins answered.

"Hell, I'd look sad too then....is he still living down on Forty-Seventh Street?"

The drums slid in underneath the bass and the bass dropped back — amid strong applause and a few..."Yeahs!" And Jack, not having realized it, cut in where McDougal was to have begun his solo. He smiled sheepishly at Percy R. Brookins and the piano-player hunched his shoulders and smiled back

McDougal didn't look around. He didn't change his slouched, one-sided, stance. He didn't stop staring beyond the lights, beyond the audience . . . beyond the room itself. Yet his left foot kept time with the light bombs the drummer dropped — and the soft scrape of the brushes. And he held his tenor lightly against his leg.

Little Jug pulled a handkerchief from his back pocket and wiped his cheeks and around the back of his neck. He stared at the black, glistening back of McDougal's head and then leaned down and whispered to Percy R. Brookins.

"McDougal sure could stand a haircut. He looks as bad as ol' Theo." And they both knew how bad ol' Theo looked and they both frowned and laughed.

Percy R. Brookins touched a chord lightly to give some color to Jake's drum solo and then he said.

"Man that stud has suffered for that colored woman."

Little Jug added,

"And those three little brownskin crumbcrushers."

Percy R. Brookins hit another chord and then,

"They *almost* wouldn't rent to him down on Forty-Seventh Street."

Little Jug laughed,

"Crime does not pay."

Jake the skin-man made a couple of breaks on the snare drums which meant that he was about to give it to McDougal.

Percy R. Brookins turned to face his piano and then he got an idea. He looked at Little Jug and spoke with a serious look behind the curious smile on his face,

"You know that cat's out for blood? I mean he's out to blow the real thing. You know what I mean? Like, he's no Guy Lombago. Do you know that?"

Little Jug ran into some triplets and skipped a couple of beats and rolled McDougal in — right on time.

McDougal rode in on a long, hollow, gut bucket note that made Percy R. Brookins laugh, and caused "Pro, the Man" to cock his head and rub his cheek. The tall, worried-looking white man pulled his tenor close to his stomach, hunched his shoulders, closed his eyes — and blew!

Little Jug stared at McDougal, then he looked at Percy R. Brookins, shaking his head slowly.

"The Cat has found out the real happenings. I mean like where *we* get it from, you dig? I mean like with Leola and those kids...and Forty-Seven and those jive landlords, you dig? The man's been burnt, Percy. Listen to that somitch . . . listen to him!"

McDougal's eyes were closed and he did not see the dark woman in the cotton suit that ballooned away from the great bulge of her stomach. He did not see her ease into a chair at the back of the dark, smoky room. He didn't see the smile on her face or the sweat upon her flat nose.

He was too busy telling the truth . . .the whole truth.

# THREE POEMS

BY PHIL PETRIE

COLUMBUS
He bowed his head, caressed his cross
then turned his ships to sea;
He did not know where he was bound
but sailed with bel-esprit

His tiny ships, alas, touched land
that looked beyond compare;
He sensed at once that they had come
to, Lord, he knew not where.

He raised his sails and headed home
but not without chagrin
For he was sailing back to Spain
not knowing where he'd been.

RAG MAN
Mama, listen, here comes Buddy Bailey
The Blues singing man
The sad singing man
Mama listen, here comes Buddy Bailey
The rag crying man.
*Be dah dee dum day*
*A nickel for your rags.*
Hush Boy, that ain't no to-be-pitied tune
The blues singing man
The sad singing man
Is humming 'cause he's free.
Mama, you teasing me
You can't be black and free
In Clarksville, Tennessee.
*Be dah dee dum day*
*A nickle for your rags.*

## THE HOLLOW MAN

The fickle hand of fate reached out
And fell upon
A new voice in an old world
A new dreamer with old dreams
And with its fingers of
Death and disease
Hatred and hunger
Shaped a young dreamer
Into an old realist
Who had no need for hope
An old man who had no need for dreams
An old hater who had no need for God
For hopes and dreams cannot sustain a man
Who thinks that life occurs by chance
Not by the plan of God.

He was an old man
In a new age
Bent by an old dream
His rotten and wrinkled face
Gashed with new folds
Mirrored the old scheme:
"Hope reduced to dreams
Dreams deferred to faith
All destroyed by fate."

He was an old fool
With a new philosophy
Which was no philosophy
For he never learned that
Man without hope is lost
Man without dreams is hollow
Man without God isn't born.

So now he sits in his rocking chair
An old man
In a new age
With nothing to look forward to
And nothing to look back upon
Waiting to be claimed by Death.

BY BIRAGO DIOP

When memory goes looking for dead wood, it picks up whatever faggot it pleases

The dim horizon encircles my eyes. Through by-gone summer greens and autumn browns I scan vast stretches of savannah and find only denuded hilltops dark as old slaughtered giants that the snow refuses to cover, because they were infidels, no doubt.

Like an inept weaver, winter is unable to pick or to card its cotton; all it spins and weaves is soft rain. Gray is the sky and cold; the pale sun's teeth are chattering; by the fireside I warm my benumbed limbs.

Fire from the wood that one has felled and chopped oneself seems warmer than any other fire. Galloping through the cracking flames, my thoughts go one by one over paths that my memories single out and invade.

Suddenly the flames become red rays of a sun setting on the undulating waves. On the fleeting background, the broken billows form furtive will-o-the-wisps. Fatigued by its long voyage, the ship lazily winds around Almadies Point.

"Are those tiny things the Mamelles?" an ironical voice beside me had asked.

Yes! Those tiny things were the Mamelles, the tip end of Senegal. Scarcely one hundred meters high. I had to admit this to the young woman who had been so timid and self-effacing throughout the crossing that I had not been able to resist calling her Violet. And now shrinking Violet was asking, mockingly, if these tiny things were the Mamelles. judging my mountains too modest.

In pain I told her that farther south, since she was continuing the cruise, she would find the Fouta-Djallon, the Cameroon Mountains, etc. Violet thought none the less that nature hadn't expended much effort when she endowed Senegal with those two ridiculous piles of rock, moss-covered here, eroded there.

It wasn't until later, much later, after my first return home, when I met Amadou Koumba and picked up the crumbs of his knowledge and wisdom, that I learned, among other things, among so many other things, what the Mamelles really are: those two humps on the Cap-Vert peninsula, the last bits of African soil that the sun contemplates lingeringly each evening before sinking into the big sea.

When memory goes looking for dead wood, it picks up whatever faggot it pleases.

Tonight, by the fireside, my memory ties together with the same bit of liana my little mountains, Momar's wives, and blend timid violet, to whom I rather belatedly report, in reply to her ironical question, what Amadou-Koumba rotld me

Where wives are concerned, two is not a good number. Anyone who wants to avoid frequent quarrels, cries, reproaches, and spiteful insinuations, needs either three wives or one, but not two. Two wives in the same home always have with them a third companion who is not only good for nothing but also proves to be the worst of counsellors. This companion is Envy with a voice as sharp and bitter as tamarind juice.

Envious, Momar's first wife Khary certainly was. She could have filled ten calabashes with her jealousy and thrown them in a well, and still have ten times ten goatskins full in the depths of her evil heart. It is true that Khary probably had no great reason to be overly happy about her fate, for she was a hunchback. Oh! hers was an infinitesimal little hump that a well-starched blouse or a wide-pleated boubou could easily hide. But Khary imagined that all eyes were riveted to her hump.

She could still hear ringing in her ears the cries: "Khary-the-hunchback! Khary-the-hunchback!" and the mockery of her playmates when as a little girl she went around, like the others, bare to the waist. Every few minutes her playmates would ask to hold the baby that she carried on her back. Enraged, she would chase them, and woe betide anyone who fell into her clutches! Khary would scratch her, tear out her hair and snatch off her ear-rings. Her victim could cry and scream as much as she pleased; only her playmates could free her from the hunchback's grasp when they were not too afraid of the latter's blows. For grown-ups didn't interfere in their disputes any more than they did in the children's games.

As she matured, Khary's disposition had not improved, quite the contrary; it had soured like milk stepped over by a genii. And now it was Momar who suffered from the wretched humor of his hunchback wife. When he went to the fields, he had to carry along his own meal. Khary was unwilling to leave the house, for fear of mocking glances; nor would she help her husband with the farming.

Tired of working all day without getting a hot meal until dark, Momar had decided to take a second wife and had wed Koumba. At the sight of her husband's new wife, Khary should have become the best of spouses, the most loving of wives. That was what Momar had naively expected — but nothing of the sort happened.

And yet, Koumba, too, was a hunchback. But her hump really exaggerated the proportions of a respectable protuberance. Viewed from the rear, she looked like a dyer's canary with a foulard and gourd on its head. Despite her hump, Koumba was gay, sweet, and lovable.

Back in the days when she used to play, bare-breasted, and they poked fun at little Koumba-the-humpback by asking to hold the baby she had on her back, she would answer, laughing louder than the others: "I hardly think he would go to you. He doesn't even want to come down and nurse."

Later, on meeting adults, Koumba, who knew them to be less mocking, perhaps, but more wicked than children, had not changed her disposition. In her husband's home she remained the same as ever. Considering Khary as a big sister, she tried hard to please her. She did all the heavy housework, sifted the grain, and pounded the millet. Each day she took Momar his meal and helped him with his work in the fields.

Khary was no happier for that, far from it. More than before she was sour and embittered, seeing that Koumba didn't seem to mind being a hunchback. Envy is so gluttonous that it feeds on any food. So Momar lived half-happily between his two wives, both humpbacked, but one, gracious, kind, and amiable, the other mean, grumbling, and ill-disposed like a *derrière* at dawn.

Often, to help her husband for a long period, Koumba would carry to the fields the meal prepared the evening before or at daybreak. When, after digging and weeding since morning, they saw their shadows crouch beneath them seeking refuge from the sun, Momar and Koumba would stop work. Then Koumba would heat the rice or the stew and share it with her husband. Later they would lie in the shade of the tamarind tree that stood in the middle of the field. Instead of sleeping like Momar, Koumba would stroke his head and perhaps daydream of women with perfect forms.

Of all trees, the tarmarind is the one that provides the thickest shade, through its foliage that the sun rarely penetrates, one can sometimes catch a glimpse of the stars — in broad daylight. That is why the tamarind is the tree most frequented by spirits, good or bad, calm or dissatisfied.

Many madmen, who were sane on leaving their village or their hut in the morning, scream and sing in the evening. In the middle of the day they had passed beneath a tamarind tree, where they had seen what should not have been seen: beings from another realm, spirits whom they had offended by their words or deeds.

There are women, weeping, laughing, yelling, and singing in the villages, who have gone crazy because they had poured on the ground boiling water from a pot and had burned spirits who were passing by or resting in the courtyard. These spirits had then waited for them in the shade of a tamarind tree and had "touched their brain."

Neither Momar nor Koumba had ever offended or injured the spirits by word or deed. So they could rest in the shade of the tamarind without fearing the visit or vengeance of the wicked spirits.

While Momar was sleeping that day, Koumba, sewing nearby, thought she heard a voice in the tamarind tree calling her name. Lifting her head, she saw, on the first branch of the tree, an old, a very old woman whose long hair, whiter than unstrung cotton, covered her back.

"Are you at peace, Koumba?" the old woman asked.

"At peace, thank you, Grandmother," Koumba answered.

"Koumba, I know how good-hearted and deserving you have been ever since you were first able to tell right from left. I want to do you a great favour. Friday, under the full moon, on N'Guew Hill, the girl-spirits will dance. When the tom-toms are beating furiously, and the dance becomes most animated, and when one dancer hurries to replace another dancer, you will come closer and say to the girl-spirit next to you 'Here, hold the baby I have on my back; it's my turn to dance'."

That Friday it so happened that Momar was sleeping in the hut of Khary, his first wife. In the village, those who stayed up the latest, had already turned over once or twice, when Koumba left her hut and started out toward N'Guew Hill.

From afar she heard the irresponsible tom-toms and rhythmic hand-clapping. The girl-spirits were dancing the *sa-n'diaye*, twisting, turning one after another in the middle of the joyous circle. Koumba drew nearer and clapped her hands to the astounding rhythm of the tom-tom and the frantic whirlwind of dancers as one gave way to another.

One, two, three, .....ten of them had twirled and twirled, with *boubous* and *pagnes* flying. Then Koumba, offering her hump to her neighbour on the left, said: "Here, hold my baby; it's my turn to dance."

The girl-spirit took the hump and Koumba ran away. She did not stop running till she was back in her hut, which she entered just as the first cock crowed. The girl-spirit couldn't catch her, for that was the signal for the end of the dance and for the spirits to depart for home — to return the next Friday there was a full moon.

Koumba no longer had her hump. Her finely plaited hair fell down over her long, thin gazelle-like neck. As he left his first wife's hut in the morning, Momar saw Koumba and thought he was still dreaming; he rubbed his eyes several times. Koumba told him what had happened.

Khary's saliva turned to gall in her mouth when she saw Koumba drawing water from the well. Khary's eyes became blood-shot; when she opened her mouth, it was as dry as a clay awaiting the first rains .... but no sound came forth, and she fell in a faint. Momar and Koumba picked her up and carried her back to the hut. Koumba kept watch over her, gave her something to drink, massaged her, and spoke soothingly to her.

When Khary recovered from the suffocation that had been caused by jealousy rising from her stomach to her throat, Koumba, still friendly, told her how she had lost her hump and indicated how Khary, too, might get rid of hers.

Impatiently Khary awaited the next Friday with the full moon; she thought it would never come. Dragging around all day long, the sun no longer seemed in a hurry to return home, and night lingered long before leaving its hut to lead its herd of stars to pasture.

Finally, the Friday arrived, as everything eventually does. Khary couldn't eat a mouthful that evening. She made Koumba repeat the old woman's advice and instructions. Then she heard all the noises of early nightfall diminish and vanish; she listened as the sound of later night were born and grew. When the earth was cold, she started out toward N'Guew Hill where the girl-spirits were dancing.

It was the moment when the dancers were vying in skill, suppleness, and endurance, encouraged and supported by the cries, chants, and handclapping of their companions around the circle. Each was impatient to show off her talent to the ever-faster rhythm of the frenzied tom-toms.

Khary approached, clapped her hands as her husband's second wife had advised; then, after one, three, ten girl-spirits had entered the circle twirling and left it gasping for breath, she said to her neighbour: "Here, hold my child; it's my turn to dance."

"Oh! No you don't!," the girl-spirit snapped. "It's *my* turn. Here, hold this one that was handed to me a whole month ago and that no one has come to claim!"

With this, the girl-spirit stuck on Khary's back the hump that Koumba had entrusted to her. The first cock crowed that very instant; the girl-spirits disappeared, and Khary remained alone on N'Guew Hill, alone with her two humps.

Lifting her skirts, she began to run straight ahead. She ran by night; she ran by day; she ran so far and so fast that she reached the sea and jumped in. But she didn't disappear completely. The sea was unwilling to swallow her whole.

So, it's the two humps of Khary-Khougué that overhang the point at Cap-Vert. It is they that the last rays of the sun light up on the soil of Africa.

It's the two humps of Khary that have become the Mamelles.

*Translated from the French by Mercer Cook*

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# BOOK REVIEWS

OKYEAME. No 1 1961

The appearance of a new African literary journal is a considerable event. OKYEAME is the journal of the Ghana Society of Writers, and is promised quarterly from now on. The first number is attractively produced and well printed. There is an excellent cover-design (unattributed), but the blocks in the text are of variable quality, and most of them seem to have no particular bearing on the subject — they are "doodles" rather than illustrations. In general, however, this first number looks well and deserves congratulations to the Society of Writers.

The existence of OKYEAME will undoubtedly encourage new writers to come forward, and within a year or two the editors may have an adequate panel of contributors to draw on. At present there is no denying that the material is thin. There are too many mediocre contributions and too many by the same small group of writers. The best thing here are the poems of Kwesi Brew and a chapter from a novel by Cameron Duodu. Kwesi Brew's language has weight and a kind of heldback rhythm which keeps the readers attention. He also has a vivid descriptive gift, as shown in the opening lines of his poem, A Plea for Mercy:

> We have come to your shrine to worship—
> We the sons of the land.
> The naked cowherd has brought
> The cows safely home,
> And stands silent with his bamboo flute
> Wiping the rain from his brow;

Cameron Duodu's chapter, The Tax Dodger, has a good deal of impudent vitality, of which this paragraph is a far example:

"Even my arrest appeared like a joke — I was going to Kwaa Maanu's store where we boys always gathered, when the "OBK" (the Office Book Keeper in charge of the Local Authority Police Station) called me. I was wearing my coffee gaberdine trousers which I had sewn in Kumasi some time ago when my grandfather sent me to Ahfo to see about some little cocoa farms he's got there. I was also wearing brown "talking mokes" to match: a pair of mocassin shoes with a lot of iron protectors at the bottom which were put there not because I feared the shoes would wear out early but because they made quite a good noise on the hard pavement and that compelled people to turn around to see who was coming. Yes, I was quite boogied up and when that OBK guy called me, I thought he was going to ask me where I sewed my trousers and where I bought my "mokes" and how much they cost. I had consequently thought up some big figures which would let him know that a guy like me, although "unbeeze", that is unemployed, could yet challenge those monthly working fellows when it came to real good buying. And, of course, I had a lot of big names at the tip of my tongue regarding where I got trousers made— names that would stagger that bush son of a gun who called himself OBK — "Tiger Bay" for instance — I was sure he'd never heard the name of that famous Kumasi tailoring shop. You can see my great surprise therefore when he asked quite bluntly as soon as I got where he was standing: "Have you paid your Land Poll?"

Unfortunately, a single chapter like this gives us no clue as to Cameron Duodu's ability to construct a plot, a reef which has wrecked several young African novelists who can write vividly enough. But it does whet our appetite for the appearance of his novel, and so fully justifies its publication here. He is certainly not dull.

G. Adali-Mortty offers a careful analysis of Ewe Poetry. Efua Sutherland contributes a lively traditional story about a spirit child who is outwitted by a Fool, and an interesting account of the work of the Ghana Experimental Theatre. Otherwise, there are extracts from an unbearably pedestrian historical drama by E. A. Harrison:

> We in Ashanti
> Have heard this talk before
> And many times and off
> Since the Great Tutu went forth
> To overcome our enemies

There is a short story by Frank Parkes, which abounds with lines like: "Illumination dawned fast on this fair captivating girl". Language and

feeling throughout as dead as mutton. There is a pompous piece by M. F. Dei-Anang called *A Writer's Outlook*. And there are a number of poems ranging from the moderate to the downright bad. The best of these is Adali-Mortty's *King Coconut* The worst is undoubtedly K. B. Jones-Quartey's *Stranger, Why Do You Wonder So?* which ends with the following fatuous apostrophe:

Take heart, O stranger to our land.
Tomorrow we shall have the forest cleared.
The vulture will espy no dung,
The child and mother will be clothed,
The snake will turn its poison on itself
The small tree-bear look down
From museum walls, without a cry.
Give us but the morrow:
Make way for Africa in the march
To heaven — or to hell.
And would that make you wonder less,
O stranger to our land?

But there is quite enough here to encourage young writers all over Ghana to get out their pens. The uneven harvest in this first number does not mean that OKYEAME is premature. We shall be able to judge that in two or three year's time, when it should have won new readers and new writers for itself in every part of the country.

Gerald Moore.

*THE AFRICAN* by William Conton
(Heinemann, 15/-'

Having read William Conton's book *The African*, and allowed myself a month before the review, I decided I did not like the book, which covers far too long a span in the hero, Kisimi Kamara's life, rambles far to wide from the primitive village in Songhai, a mythical British colony, to the Lake District in England and back again to Songhai before ending, only two hundred pages later, in South Africa; and the novel touches far too many live issues, tribalism, nationalism, panafricanism, to take any of them at all deeply. Another emotional objection is that the hero's background cannot be authentic in East Africa today and must be less so in West Africa. Is it not time our novelists based heroes on backgrounds that are other than those that have become stock in writing about Africa... the traditional tribal background? What about the background, bourgeois and Victorian, in which so many of us have grown in the twenties, thirties and forties of this century? I wish someone would write about it too, but this may well be a private grouse.

But Mr. Conton is such an excellent writer and his sense of invoking Africa so good, "her till of (Kamara's mother's shop) a cigarette tin", that overall faults must be forgiven. This is a delightful book to read and Conton's feel for language is charming. The weakest part of his novel paradoxically seems to carry the writer's most serious thought on Africa in general. The hero meets a white South African girl, engaged to another South African both of whom are of Boer descent. The weakness is not in the meeting itself in the Lake District nor in the romance that half-develops between Kamara and Greta but in the girl's death, killed by her South African ex-fiance, and in what happens later, much later, after Kamara has become Prime Minister of Songhai when he throws up everything and, after a spot of diamond smuggling, travels incognito to South Africa to avenge the girl. Too weak and improbable but it is then that the book brings out the lines along which the writer's mind is working. Kamara has had pride in his family, in his tribe. At school he learns to live with people of other tribes, an exercise continued at university with people of other, wider backgrounds. Getting back, he is shocked at the 'development' of his country; "large and indescribable doses of the materialism of 'Western civilisation'...a deliberate policy of abandoning...a way of life which our forebears had pursued for centuries.....we were in danger of losing our sense of direction." He teaches and gives that up for national politics and, within a few words of the leadership of the Pan Africa Movement, humanity, in the form of Greta's memory, beckons. Kamara meets his quarry drunk, 'at last completely in my power'. It is

pity, not revenge, the humanity of the situation that moves him to assist the drunken and unrepentant Boer. For finally, the key sentence to Mr. Conton's novel may well be that uttered by Greta, the South African girl of Boer descent to Kamara, the student, 'Racial hatred is wicked, whoever shows it and against whom it is directed.'

Erisa Kironde.

JAGUA NANA by Cyprian Ekwensi. Hutchinson. London 1961.

"Jagua had just had a cold bath, and, in the manner of African women, she sat on a low stool with a mirror propped between her bare knees, gazing at her wet hair. Only one cloth—a flowered cotton print—concealed her nakedness and she had wound it over her breasts and her armpits. Her arms and shoulders were bare, and she sat with the cloth bunched between her thighs so that the mirror bit into the skin between her knees."

This opening paragraph of Cyprian Ekwensi's new novel immediately conjures up the image of the woman who is the heroine of his tale.

Jagua Nana is an independent woman from the East, who has settled in Lagos. Although she is no longer young she clings to a life of enjoyment, of music and drinking, of fine clothes and of numerous lovers. Although she is middle-aged she can hold her own against her younger rivals, because she is experienced and shrewd and she has a superb dress sense.

The author succeeds in doing two things in this novel: he has created an unforgettable character in Jagua Nana herself, and he conveys an excellent picture of Lagos — not everybody's Lagos but Jagua's Lagos.

Jagua is a magnificent woman. She may be a harlot, but she is also an impressive woman full of warmth and charm. The author brngs us completely under her spell and we fail to apply to her the dreary morality of our everyday lives. We sympathise with Jagua when she abandoned her "reformed" life as an Onitsha market woman which she was talked into by her brother. We feel, with her, that the glamour and the excitement and the sparkle had gone out of her life. Jagua is a tough woman, but she can also be tender. She is reckless but she can also bring sacrifices. Above all she has vitality and she is real and she will live in the memory long after one has put down the novel.

Jagua's Lagos is the Lagos of nightclubs of highlife, of crime, and meriuana smoking. It is the Lagos of squalor living side by side with glamour. It is the undefineable zone between the slum and the world of the "been-tos" in which pimp meets politician. Everybody in Lagos will come into contact with this aspect of the city's life some time or other—and people from the most diverse walks of life from an integral part of it.

Many Nigerians accused Cyprian Ekwensi after his first novel "People of the City" of "representing them in a bad light"; I am afraid that the same argument will be raised once again. But such criticism is entirely unjustified, and moreover irrelevant. Jagua Nana and her world exist—and I have no doubt that this world is constantly on the increase in Lagos. In describing Jagua the author has rightly refrained from drawing any morals—to him she is a flamboyant and memorable human being; and he is interested in the joys and disappointments of her life, in her trumphs and tragedy. This is legitimate material for a novel and nobody in his right senses would assume that all people of Lagos are like that.

My criticism of the novel is that towards the end the author overworks his plot and we momentarily lose interest in the heroine while we are getting involved in the tougher aspect of Nigerian party politics. Least satisfactory in the book is the contrived ending. Jagua having lost her rival lovers in tragic deaths returns home, a broken woman. More misfortune befalls her — until a happy ending is fabricated with the help of £50,000 that come to her like a *deus ex machina*.

The ending rings false. But it should not blind us to the considerable talent of the author. This book is infinitely more succesful than "People of the City," and we look forward to more works from this lively writer.

Ulli Beier

AMERICAN NEGRO ART

by Cedric Dover Studio Books 1960

"The art of the American Negro has always been a minority art in the mainstream of American culture. It began when the American Negroes emerged as a group and it will continue as long as they will think of themselves as a group, which they will do for generations after they are full partners in their native democracy.

Knowing this, most Negro artists are unimpressed by the feathered phrases of escape that periodically float from Hale Woodruff's nest in Washington Square. They do not think of themselves "simply as American artists, whose primary tasks are to seek fuller "integration in American life" and identification with "mid-twentieth century internationalism" They regard themselves as Negro artists who are also American artists. They intend to rise with their people, not away from them; and so they want their work, through widening and deeping of their artist-audience relationships to aid a great struggle for deserved satisfactions and fulfilment."

A book on American Negro art must naturally resolve around the complex problem of the Negro identity in the United States. Undoubtedly Cedric Dover has summed up in the passage above the conscious attitudes of the majority of Negro artists. But their sentiments are sadly betrayed by the pictures that illustrate Mr Dover's book.

Thumbing through its pages one is amazed by the complete lack of indentity of most of the paintings and sculptures. Not only does the material shown fail to impress us with the fact that there is such a thing as "Negro art," but the majority of works shown, simply float anonymously in the mainstream of Wetern art, and the different artists can be identified as belonging to various Western movements like surrealism, impressionism, social realism, abstract painting and so on. They fail to impress us as individual personalities. Negroness is for the most part expresed in the subject matter; black mothers and children; farm labourers and what not. But neither the style, nor the treatment nor the expression break away from American conventions (or should one rather say European conventions). A very typical example is Richmond Barthé's "The Negro Looks Ahead" which has been selected as a frontis piece. It is a work executed in the manner of Rodin, a style that is hardly justifiable in the middle of the twentieth century. The sculpture is a competent piece of work but neither the treatment nor the sentimentality expressed in it are typically Negro in any way. It portrays a determined young Negro (whose features are so Caucasian that he could easily pass for white) looking ahead to a bright new future. "The brave new world" feeling of this work seems to me to be as American as anything can be.

Ninety per cent of the work shown could not be identified as negro at first sight in the way in which one could identify any work of Tamayo, Oriszco or Riviera as *Mexican* at first sight. Most of the American Negro artists seem worried about their respectability rather than their identity.

But there are exceptions. Some like John Biggers free themselves from conventions through social protest. But on the whole social protest seems to have played a far less significant role in negro painting than in negro literature. The outstanding artists presented in this book are —in the opinion of the reviewer — Jacob Lawrence, William Johnson, Irene Clerk, and Barbara Chase. Cedric Dover describes the first three as "recent primitives." These three artists are highly gifted and their work is the most individual in the book. They are the only artists presented in this book in whose work affinities with African sculpture could be traced, even though only by a considerable stretch of imagination. They seem to have received another important stimulous from European expressionism. But taken all together, they are to my mind the only artists to whom the quotation from Cedric Dover's text could truly be applied. They have actually succeeded to express their negro

identity in their work. Barbara Chase is in a slightly different position. She forms part of a modern international movement of metal sculptors and her work shows obvious affinities with the late Germaine Richier. But the work is so full of vigour and vitality that it stands out miles among the other sculpture shown in the book and one is confident that an artist who shows such unusual talent even in her early twenties will go far. Another sculptor, Ed Wilson, must be mentioned here. His figure "Minority Man" is more negroesque than the work of Barbara Chase and one regrets that we are not shown many more works by this artist.

It could be argued. in fact that if this book had been devoted entirely to eight or ten artists only, it could have been more far more representative of "negro" art than it is now, when its pages are filled with mediocrity. However this was clearly not the author's intention. He set himself the gigantic task of giving us a complete survey of the existing negro art and his work has achieved encylopaedic proportions. It will remain a unique reference book in times to come. Even so one would have welcomed a somewhat more critical approach. Cedric Dover is usually more concerned with the intentions and noble sentiments of the artists than with the artistic solution of their human problems.

The author is however a great authority on negro history and culture in general and his background material in this book provides one of the finest and most penetrating analyses of the negro in American culture. The book is an absolute must for anybody who is interested in the cultural problems and dilemmas of the American negro.

ULLI BEIER

LA CREATION DU MONDE,
COSMOLOGIQUE by B. Holas

Theatre des Nations, Paris. 1960.

B. Holas is known to us as an ethnographer who has published numerous authorative works on the Senufo, the Kono and other peoples of West Africa.

Now he has turned dramatist and presented us with an unusual play: "The Creation of the World; a cosmological comedy."

This play is based on traditional African creation myths. The basis of the plot seems to be the fascinating creation story of the Kono people in Guinea, which Holas has recounted in Black Orpheus No. 2. To this have been added elements from other creation myths and the whole has been treated with considerable poetic freedom.

The gigantic theme of the creation of the world and the origin of death has here been treated in a lighthearted, playful manner and the whole is as remote from the spirit of an African creation myth as the "Prologue in Heaven" of Goethe's Faust is from the book Job.

Unfortunately the reviewer has not been able to see the successful productions in Abidjan and Paris but the script leaves little doubt that this makes excellent, colourful, theatre. One wonders how a Nigerian production might succeed?

The author has done interesting pioneering work. West African mythology should be rich in dramatic material, and I look forward to see a Cosmological *tragedy* based on Nigerian traditions.

Omidiji Aragbabalu

"GUIANA BOY" by Lauchmonen.
New Literature, 1960; Price 16/-.
"KYK-OVER-AL ed. A. J. Seymour.
British Guiana, (1960; Price 21/-)

*Guiana Boy* is a family concern. It is written by Lauchmonen, pen-name for Mr Peter Kempadoo, published by New Literature, newly formed by Mr Peter Kempadoo, describes the boyhood life of Mr Peter Kempadoo. At first sight this would not seem to be a very propitious origin for this novel, but the writer had certain views in mind and he manages to succeed to a great extent.

When the book first appeared Mr Kempadoo wrote me telling me something about the aims of his new publishing company. He said:

"New Literature (Publishing) Ltd. was set up with the aim of publishing general books of fiction with the emphasis on new-ness for which

we are seeking in various parts of the Commonwealth; places such as the Caribbean, Africa, etc. — anywnere in other words, where we can find new material being expressed in new idioms." There is no doubt that he succeeds with *Guiana Boy*. The material is new and concerns the childhood of Lilboy on a sugar-estate in British Guiana, the conflicts that arise between him and his family, since they have different values and between his working class world and the world of Miss Elizabeth, the manager's daughter. The writer writes with smooth-flowing prose, like some-one narrating a story quickly, and the episodical nature of the arrangement allows him to highlight different incidents in the child's life.

So party-going, the meeting with Elizabeth, a fishing expedition, school-life and his first sexual experience all loom equally large in a child's life. The use of dialet words give a certain amount of authenticity to the writing but in the absence of any explanation it would most likely be lost on an English reading public, for whom after all the book is primarily intended. For instance when his mother asks his father how he expects "fowl-pickney to come from duck-egg?", it is difficult for one unacquainted with the dialect to realise that she means that the son cannot be different from his father. At times the writer in his desire to express the dialect in an intelligible English form falls between two stools. For instance "ai't" does not express the Guianese equivalent of "am not."

But these are perhaps small points. The swift description in the chapter on *Shrimps*, the humour in *Teacher Cort and the Donkey*, the poetry of the section that describes the August vacation as almost "a whole century of days", and the crudeness of the sexual encounter with Mary Ann, make the novel well worth reading.

The twenty-seventh issue of *Kyk-over-Al* is devoted to the Arts in Guiana. There is an article on Guiana Literature by the editor, but it appeared too early to include any mention of *Guiana Boy*. There is an account of the life of Rev. Hamilton, a Guianese who for some time has been working in the Sudan, and there are articles on sculpture, music, art and dance. There are also peoms by West Indian writers and reviews of *Latticed Echoes* by Mittelholzer and *Palace of the Peacock* by Wilson Harris, both Guianese writers. This too is well worth the buy, as it helps us keep in touch with what is happening on the other side. Seymour's address is 23, North Road, Bourda, Georgetown, British Guiana, and copies may be obtained from him.

O. R. Dathorne

NIGERIA 1960: a special Independence issue of Nigeria Magazine.

October 1960. (Published by Nigeria Magazine at the Exhibition Centre, Marina, Lagos.) 2/-.

This special number of Nigeria Magazine, planned to mark Nigeria's Independence, contains over 200 pages loaded with interest and information and illustrated with an abundance of photographs. It summarises Nigeria's historical background and achievement and will be an invaluable reference tool to anyone who is interested in African development today.

But it has no hint of the dreariness of a reference book. It is a delight to open at any page, beautifully designed and lively, and alive both in its typography and layout, its illustrations as well as in the excellence of the written content.

The seventeen contributors are all well-known personalities in Nigeria and many have made their mark on the world at large. Each contributes an article on the subject in which he has already made a name. Ogunsheye on economics, Margery Perham, Kirk-Greene, Dike and Hodgkin on various historical aspects; Beier on literature, Fagg, Duerden and Verger on archaeology, art and Brazil respectively; Colin Legum of the London "Observer" (surprisingly) on Benin.

This is to mention but a few, but goes to demonstrate the quality of this special number. Every article is illustrated and besides, there are 48 pages of photographs in a section called "Nigeria and its people."

The entire preparation and printing was done in Nigeria under the enterprising editorship of Michael Crowder and it sells at the ludicrously low price of 2/-.

Remi Jones

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